



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 4 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:59 P.M., 04 November 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Imran Hussain:

[11865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will publish a list of items licensed for sale to Israel for (a) military and (b) dual-use which are being used in the West Bank by the Israeli (i) military, (ii) police and (iii) other government body.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We publish annual and quarterly reports on export licences issued, refused, or revoked, by destination, including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the products covered by these licences. They are available to view on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>.

Summary data on our current export licences to Israel was also published on 11 June 2024: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/export-control-licensing-management-information-for-israel>.

■ Business: Productivity

Ben Coleman:

[10856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to encourage businesses to use data more effectively to increase productivity.

Sarah Jones:

The Invest 2035: Industrial Strategy Green Paper sets out our vision for a credible, 10-year plan to deliver the certainty and stability businesses need to invest in the high-growth sectors that will drive our growth mission.

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper demonstrates our ambition to support businesses in using data more effectively, including exploring interventions that will: improve the use of public sector data (as a driver of growth); better empower individuals and businesses with their data through the development of Smart Data schemes; and help improve data maturity in businesses. The consultation is open until 24 November 2024.

■ Export Controls: Israel

Imran Hussain:

[11868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing Israel from the list of approved recipients for the Open General license.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Following the decision by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on 2 September 2024 to suspend licences related to use by Israel in the current military operations in Gaza, a number of open general export licences were amended.

Further detail on the affected licences can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-to-exporters-202420-suspension-of-licences-for-israel>.

The OGEL for exports in support of the F-35 programme has been amended to exclude exports direct to Israel. Any broader suspension with respect to this OGEL is not possible without undermining the programme overall, which would have a significant negative impact on international peace and security.

■ Industry: Productivity**Ben Coleman:****[10857]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the effective use of data to drive productivity will be included in the proposed industrial strategy council's remit.

Sarah Jones:

The Industrial Strategy Council (ISC) will be responsible for informing and monitoring the development and delivery of the long-term industrial strategy, ensuring that policy interventions are based on a high-quality evidence base. The ISC will recommend actions, focusing on growth-driving sectors and the pro-business environment. It will also evaluate impacts. Use of effective data is central to the ISC's role.

The government will legislate to establish this statutory body in due course. Ahead of legislation, we are introducing an interim Industrial Strategy Advisory Council to ensure the Industrial Strategy is developed with independent expert advice.

■ Investment: Basildon**James McMurdock:****[10030]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to encourage companies to invest in Basildon.

Sarah Jones:

Growth is the government's central economic mission and we are currently developing an Industrial Strategy which aims to drive growth across the UK through investment in key sectors and regions.

The Department of Business and Trade (DBT) encourages investment across the UK through working closely with local council teams. A recent example is the 11th of September opening of Iveco's UK HQ in Basildon, closely supported by DBT alongside Essex County Council and Basildon Borough Council.

DBT regularly refers to Basildon's strong industrial base in company information requests, referring to well-established overseas investors such as the Ford Motor Company and CNH Industrial Tractors.

DBT works to promote Basildon to investors with further support from the Thames Estuary Growth Board PRP, The Thames Freeport team and the Cities and Local Growth Unit.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Liam Byrne:

[\[11837\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) policy reviews, (b) new and revised strategies, (c) green papers and (d) white papers relating to the policy areas covered in the (i) The Integrated Review 2021, published on 16 March 2021, and (ii) Integrated Review Refresh 2023, published on 13 March 2023, each Department is working on.

Ms Abena Opong-Asare:

The government has launched a number of reviews and strategies relating to policy areas covered in the Integrated Review (2021) and Integrated Review Refresh (2023). These include but are not limited to:

- Strategic Defence Review - Ministry of Defence
- AUKUS Review - Ministry of Defence
- China Audit - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Global Impact Review - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Economic Diplomacy Review - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- International Development Review - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Resilience Review - Cabinet Office
- Trade Strategy - Department for Business and Trade
- Industrial Strategy - Department for Business and Trade

■ National Security Council

Liam Byrne:

[\[11829\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the written statement entitled Cabinet Committees, published on 10 October 2024, HCWS118, for what reason the National Security Council Economic Security sub-committee has been abolished; and what steps are being taken to co-ordinate economic security policy.

Ms Abena Opong-Asare:

The body referred to in the Rt Hon. Members' question was one of a number of sub-Committees of the National Security Council (NSC). Since July 2024 the National Security Council itself considers economic security, as part of its broader strategic approach to national security including foreign policy, resilience, international relations, economic security, trade, development, defence and global issues.

Economic security is a priority for this Government, and we have taken a number of steps to coordinate economic security policy through the NSC and by embedding economic security into the Government's Industrial Strategy to support long-term stability. Economic Security is a core concern of the Growth Mission Board and our work with international partners.

Liam Byrne:

[\[11836\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the written statement entitled Cabinet Committees, published on 10 October 2024, HCWS118, for what reason the Secretary of State for Business and Trade is no longer a permanent member of the National Security Council.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The National Security Council is a Cabinet Committee, membership of Cabinet Committees is decided by the Prime Minister. Cabinet committees have a standing membership, however other Ministers will be invited according to the agenda.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Church of England: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee:

[\[11198\]](#)

To ask the Member for Battersea, representing the Church Commissioners, if she will meet with the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to discuss the condition of the Church estate in that constituency.

Marsha De Cordova:

My responsibilities relate to the work of the seven National Church Institutions, and I can give best-practice advice about diocesan and parish activity. I would be happy to meet with the Hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to discuss his constituency and any specific concerns he may have. However, he may find a discussion with the Bishop of Lichfield and the team in the Diocese of Lichfield, who are responsible for the condition of the church estate in Newcastle-under-Lyme, more productive. I will write to him to arrange an introduction.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts Council England: Reviews

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[11170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to conclude her review of Arts Council England.

Chris Bryant:

The previous public body review of Arts Council England was paused during the election and has now been closed.

We have announced a new review of Arts Council England and further details will be announced in due course.

After 14 years of indifference and cultural vandalism, this government is committed to making sure that arts and cultural activities will no longer be the preserve of a privileged few.

■ Film and Television: Government Assistance

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[11169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help support the (a) TV and (b) film industry outside of London.

Chris Bryant:

The government is firmly committed to supporting the growth of the TV and film industry across every nation and region.

Our TV sector, in particular, is centralised in London and the South East, which is why my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State has called on broadcasters to be more ambitious in growing the sector outside of London and the South East, and to commission more content from right across the UK. My Department is taking forward work to understand the barriers to further growing the industry outside of London and we are committed to working with the sector to ensure the right framework, conditions and support are in place for this to happen.

Through our UK-wide funding programmes, investment in infrastructure, tax reliefs and support for independent British content, we want the UK to be the best place in the world to make films. We fund the British Film Institute (BFI) to support the film sector through nationwide funding and initiatives. The BFI's ten year strategy, Screen Culture 2033, sets out its core principle to reach across the full breadth of our nation. The BFI have sought to devolve funding, share power, and support networks across regions, in particular through their Film Audience Network (BFI FAN) which is a collaboration of 8 film hubs.

The BFI is also tackling skills shortages in the sector to underpin growth across the UK. Under the BFI's National Lottery Skills Clusters Fund, £8.1 million has been awarded to enable six Skills Clusters across the UK to identify skills gaps, coordinate local skills training, and develop clearer pathways to long-term employment in the sector.

We support the British Film Commission's (BFC) work, with £6 million in funding, over the last five years. This funding has supported the growth of seven geographic production hubs across the UK, by investing in infrastructure and attracting global film productions that bring inward investment into the local and national economy.

We also want to support independent British content, to ensure stories from across the UK are told on screen. We recently brought in the Independent Film Tax Credit to support homegrown talent. This will mean that for the first time productions with a budget up to £15 million will be eligible for a relief of 53% on qualifying expenditure.

Films with a budget up to £23.5 million are also eligible for the IFTC and the relief will be tapered. We also support indie content across the nations and regions to grow internationally through the £28 million UK Global Screen Fund (UKGSF).

At the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor confirmed that from 1 April 2025, UK visual effects costs in film and high-end TV productions will receive a 5% increase in Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit (AVEC), for an overall rate of 39%.

In addition, to boost the contribution of film tourism to local economies, DCMS Arm's-Length Body VisitBritain uses high profile filming locations across the UK as part of its international tourism marketing activity.

■ Lotteries: Taxation

Wendy Morton:

[\[10734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of applying zero rate Society Lotteries to a compulsory levy for problem gambling.

Stephanie Peacock:

Society lotteries are a vital fundraising tool for many charities, community groups, sports clubs and other non-commercial organisations.

The Government is committed to reviewing the best available evidence from a wide range of sources and working with all stakeholders in order to support the industry and ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk.

We will provide further updates to the House soon.

■ Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[11668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to maintain the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is investing £123 million UK-wide in grassroots facilities via the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme in 2024/25. At the Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024, the Government confirmed our continued support for elite and grassroots sport by investing in multi-use facilities. Further details will be confirmed in due course.

■ Music: UK Relations with EU

Stephen Gethins:

[\[11944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of leaving the EU on the music industry.

Chris Bryant:

Since the UK's departure from the EU, DCMS has closely monitored the sector's adaptation, particularly regarding touring. This Government is working closely with the music industry, and with guidance and support to help artists and professionals navigate the challenges that have emerged.

We will engage with the EU and EU Member States, and explore how best to improve arrangements for touring across the European continent without seeing a return to free movement. Our priority remains ensuring that UK artists can continue to thrive on the global stage, including in the EU.

■ **Television****Sarah Champion:**[\[11302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the report on the future of TV distribution, published by Ofcom on 10 May 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government welcomes Ofcom's research and the report published earlier this year and intends to use this alongside our own research to ensure a robust evidence base to inform our ongoing project on the future of TV distribution.

■ **Youth Services: Slough****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[11887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the provision of youth services in Slough constituency.

Stephanie Peacock:

As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people. At the Autumn Budget, we announced £1.3 billion of extra funding through the Local Government Finance Settlement for the next financial year.

This Government recognises the vital role that youth services play in improving young people's life chances and wellbeing. That is why, on 17 October 2024, the Secretary of State committed to a new National Youth Strategy, co-produced with young people and the youth sector to support a generation to succeed.

DEFENCE**■ BAE Systems: Barrow in Furness****James Cartlidge:**[\[11917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the fire at Barrow nuclear shipyard.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the written statement I laid in the House on 30 October 2024, HCWS176.

Attachments:

1. [BAE Systems Barrow Incident](#) [HCWS 176.docx]

■ Gaza: Air Force**Imran Hussain:**[\[11855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what name has been given to the operation of RAF surveillance flights over Gaza; and what the cost of this operation was in the period between October 2023 and October 2024.

Luke Pollard:

Our mandate is narrowly defined to focus on securing the release of the hostages only, including British nationals.

We are unable comment further on detailed intelligence matters for operational security reasons.

Richard Burgon:[\[11898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has shared information gathered from surveillance flights over Gaza with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office; and if he will (a) declassify and (b) publish that information.

Luke Pollard:

Our mandate is narrowly defined to focus on securing the release of the hostages only, including British nationals. Only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authorities.

We are unable comment further on detailed intelligence matters for operational security reasons.

Richard Burgon:[\[11899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6280 on Gaza: Air Force, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that information gathered by unarmed UK surveillance aircraft and shared with the Israeli military is only used to help locate hostages.

Luke Pollard:

Our mandate is narrowly defined to focus on securing the release of the hostages only, including British nationals. Only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authorities.

We are unable comment further on detailed intelligence matters for operational security reasons.

■ Guided Weapons**Luke Akehurst:**[\[11651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Surface to Air Missile Centre command and control systems, (b) Giraffe Agile Multibeam radars and (c) Land Ceptor launcher and missile systems comprising the Sky Sabre system are deployed in (i) the UK (ii) Poland and (iii) the Falklands.

Luke Pollard:

We do not routinely disclose the locations or numbers of these platforms in the interests of security and operational effectiveness.

■ Israel: Hostage Taking**Richard Burgon:**[\[11669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on whether information gathered by unarmed UK surveillance aircraft and provided to the Israeli military was used in Operation Arnon in Nuseirat on 8 June 2024.

Luke Pollard:

Our mandate is narrowly defined to focus on securing the release of the hostages only, including British nationals. Only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authorities.

We are unable comment further on detailed intelligence matters for operational security reasons.

■ Ministry of Defence: Employers' Contributions**Dr Caroline Johnson:**[\[11939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the increase in (a) direct and (b) indirect costs to his Department of the 1.2% rise in employer national insurance contributions announced in the budget.

Maria Eagle:

The changes to employer national insurance contributions from April are expected to increase Departmental costs c.£216million in financial year 2025-26.

The Chancellor has agreed to provide funding to the public sector to support with the cost of employer national insurance contributions, which will be confirmed at a future date.

■ Ministry of Defence: Ministers' Private Offices

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much was spent on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in his Department since the dissolution of the last Parliament; and on what items this was spent.

Maria Eagle:

There has been no expenditure on new furniture and fittings, or other refurbishment of the Ministerial offices in Ministry of Defence Main Building since the dissolution of the last Parliament on 30 May 2024.

■ Ministry of Defence: Public Expenditure

James Cartlidge:

[\[11945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to footnote 1 to table 4.8 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what the (a) financial quantum, (b) relevant programme, (c) Other Government Departments involved in and (d) other relevant details of those Budget Cover Transfers are.

Maria Eagle:

All of the information relating to Budget Cover Transfers for the Department is already published in the public domain in the Ministry of Defence Main Estimates Memorandum for 2024 to 2025.

James Cartlidge:

[\[11948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of when Defence spending will reach 2.5% of GDP, and whether he has issued subsequent guidance to (a) Lord Robertson and (b) the external reviewers of Strategic Defence Review 2004-05.

Maria Eagle:

This Government's commitment to spending 2.5% on Defence is included in the Strategic Defence Review Terms of Reference. The Review will conclude in accordance with these terms, taking into account what is deliverable and affordable.

■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

James Cartlidge:

[\[11662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to respond to Question 8178 on British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty, tabled by the Hon. Member for South Suffolk on 9 October 2024 for answer on 14 October 2024.

James Cartlidge:

[\[8178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much financing his Department will contribute to the Chagos leasing settlement.

Luke Pollard:

Details of the Treaty agreed between the UK and Mauritius will come before Parliament for scrutiny in the usual manner following its signature. It would be inappropriate to release further details at this stage.

EDUCATION■ **Artificial Intelligence: Training**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[11240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve access to artificial intelligence training.

Stephen Morgan:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Romford to the answer of 15 October 2024 to Question [HL1654](#).

■ **Breakfast Clubs**

Nadia Whittome: [\[11913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure children from the most deprived households access free breakfast clubs.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to delivering on its pledge to provide free breakfast clubs in every state-funded school with primary aged pupils. We have made early progress towards this, including announcing that up to 750 early adopters will be delivering these new breakfast clubs from April 2025.

The government confirmed it will triple its investment in breakfast clubs to over £30 million in the 2025/26 financial year to help ensure children are ready to learn at the start of the school day and to help drive improvements to behaviour, attendance and attainment. This will also support parents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

■ **Carers**

Ms Julie Minns: [\[901024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve support for kinship carers.

Janet Daby:

This government recognises the valuable and important role that kinship carers play. This government also appreciates that kinship carers often take on this role at a time in their lives when they are least expecting to raise a family.

We have recently announced a £40 million package to trial a new Kinship Allowance in up to 10 local authorities to test whether paying an allowance to cover certain

costs, such as supporting a child to settle into a new home with relatives, can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends.

This investment could transform the lives of vulnerable children who can no longer live at home by allowing children to grow up within their families and communities, reducing disruption to their early years, so they can focus on schooling and building friendships.

The government also recently announced the appointment of the first ever National Kinship Care Ambassador. The Ambassador advocates for kinship children and their carers and works directly with local authorities to help them improve services, whilst sharing good practice across areas.

The department has recently published the updated guidance for local authorities, the Kinship Care statutory guidance, which is available on GOV.UK at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670d3ed5e84ae1fd8592f2fa/Kinship_Care_-_statutory_guidance_for_local_authorities_October_2024.pdf. This guidance outlines the framework for the provision of support for kinship children and kinship families.

This government is also extending the delivery of over 140 peer support groups across England, available for all kinship carers to access, where they can come together to share stories, exchange advice and support each other. We are also delivering a package of training and support that all kinship carers across England can access.

I am determined to give every child the opportunities they deserve, and kinship carers play a crucial role in delivering this. This government is considering how to most effectively transform the children's social care system to deliver better outcomes for children and families, including how best to support kinship families.

■ Catering: Cumbria

Tim Farron:

[901023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on improving the standard of placements available to young people studying Catering T Levels in Cumbria.

Janet Daby:

The department is examining what provision will best meet the needs of employers and students in this important sector, which plays an important role in Cumbria.

There are 143 level 2 and level 3 qualifications in the hospitality and catering sector for 16-19 year olds that are approved for funding in 2024/2025. Catering qualifications are not due to be defunded as part of the post 16 qualifications reform.

There is a wide range of support and guidance available for employers and providers to ensure that T Level students have a high quality experience on their industry placement. This includes workshops, webinars, continuing professional development support and online guidance. Providers also receive £550 per industry placement

student as part of their wider 16-19 funding allocation to support the costs of sourcing and setting up industry placements and can use their 16-19 bursary funding to support disadvantaged students to access placements.

The latest data shows that 78% of 2021 T Level starters who completed an industry placement were 'very' or 'quite satisfied' with it.

■ Childcare

Kirith Entwistle:

[\[901026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of childcare provision.

Stephen Morgan:

Ensuring that parents are able to access affordable and high quality childcare is a priority for this government. Our focus in reforming the system will be to ensure that there are greater and more equal opportunities to access early education for every family, and that there are greater opportunities for children to thrive and develop. As an initial step, we are progressing work to deliver new places in 3,000 nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools.

It is our ambition that all families have access to high quality, affordable and flexible early education and care, improving the life chances for every child and the work choices for every parent.

From April 2024, working parents of 2-year-olds have able to access 15 hours of government-funded childcare per week (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child's birthday. From September 2024, this was extended to parents of children aged 9 months and above, and from September 2025, working parents will be able to access 30 hours per week (over 38 weeks a year) for children from age 9 months to when they start school.

The government has committed to continue to roll out the expanded childcare entitlements for eligible working parents of children aged from nine months. We are also growing the provision of 'wraparound' before and after school provision of childcare for primary school children.

In 2024/25, we expect to provide over £1.7 billion to support local authorities and providers deliver the childcare expansion, rising, in 2027/28, to over £4.1 billion. By the same year we expect to be providing over £8 billion every year overall on new and existing early years entitlements.

The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing, including supporting them through our childcare delivery support contract where appropriate.

The government is committed to delivering a modern childcare system from the end of parental leave to the end of primary school, providing every child with a firm foundation which sets them up for life and ensures parents are able to work the jobs

and hours they choose effectively breaking down the barriers to opportunity for every family.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing. Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, departmental officials discuss with them what action they are taking to address those issues, and whether they need any additional support.

■ Department for Education: Ministers' Private Offices

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much was spent on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in her Department since the dissolution of the last Parliament; and on what items this was spent.

Janet Daby:

Since the dissolution of the last Parliament, the only purchase relating to Ministerial furniture was at a cost of £1,627.50. This spend incorporates:

- Low back, full upholstered meeting chair – Quantity 3.

There have been some modifications to the offices to facilitate additional flexibility in set up and use of the Ministerial rooms. This has been at a cost of £12,886.71. This spend incorporates:

- Relocation of floor boxes including raising access floor.

- Supply and install of cabling, sockets, data plates and residual current devices.
- Standard Liability cover.
- Labour.
- Out of hours working.

■ Digital Technology: Training

Samantha Niblett:

[\[11468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the adequacy of digital skills training for women in rural communities.

Janet Daby:

Digital skills are crucial to the delivery of all five missions of government, particularly opportunity and growth, providing the pipeline of skilled workers needed to grow the economy.

To support the digital skills needs in the country, adults aged 19 and over with low digital skills are fully-funded through the digital statutory entitlement to study Essential Digital Skills qualifications or digital Functional Skills qualifications at entry level and level 1.

The department funds essential digital skills provision through the adult skills fund (ASF). Currently, approximately 60% of the ASF is devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority. These authorities are responsible for the provision of ASF-funded adult education for their residents. The Education and Skills Funding Agency is responsible for the remaining ASF in non-devolved areas where colleges and training providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their ASF to meet the needs of their communities.

For those who are not ready for formal digital qualifications, many local areas use tailored learning within the ASF to deliver flexible courses that help adults to get online and equip them with the essential digital skills they need for life, work and further learning.

The department also funds Skills Bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills, with an offer of a job interview with an employer on completion. Training is designed and delivered in partnership with employers, ensuring we deliver the skills needed by employers in priority sectors.

Evaluation of Skills Bootcamps delivery shows that female representation was higher in Skills Bootcamps in Digital (42%) than the national gender composition of the digital workforce (29%).

Developed in partnership with employers, there are currently 33 apprenticeship standards spanning levels 3 to 7 in digital occupations, including at degree level and in areas like cyber and artificial intelligence (AI). The department's reformed growth and skills levy will deliver greater flexibility for learners and employers and is aligned with its industrial strategy to create routes into good, skilled jobs in growing industries, including in digital.

Across government, the new Industrial Strategy will channel support to eight growth-driving sectors in which the UK excels today and will propel it forwards tomorrow. Digital technologies have been identified as one of the eight growth-driving sectors and the department is currently consulting on the barriers to growth, including skills, in this sector.

Furthermore, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology has commissioned an AI Opportunities Action Plan, which will set out the essential role that equipping the UK's workforce with the right skills and attracting top talent will play in supporting the growth of the AI sector.

■ Education and Training: Young People

Jade Botterill:

[901013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve opportunities for young people.

Catherine McKinnell:

All young people should have every opportunity to succeed, no matter who they are, where they are from, or how much their parents earn.

Through the Opportunity Mission and the Child Poverty Taskforce we will make sure that all young people thrive in education and will break the unfair link between background and success. After 14 years where children's horizons have grown narrower and the disadvantage gap has persistently remained a chasm, we are putting education back at the heart of national life. Creating 3,000 new or expanded school-based nurseries, recruiting 6,500 additional teachers, and launching Skills England to transform opportunities and drive growth. We are also investing more in children's services to set them on a sustainable trajectory and have announced new funding for kinship care and fostering to keep children safe and provide family security for our most vulnerable children.

Education: Young People**Tom Rutland:**[\[901014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the capacity of the education system to help improve opportunities for young people.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is assessing the capacity of the education system as part of our work to deliver the Opportunity Mission. This is why we are starting by recruiting 6,500 additional teachers to address workforce shortages, creating 3,000 new or expanded school-based nurseries to increase the availability of high quality affordable childcare places and launching Skills England which will play a pivotal role in making sure our skills system meets the needs of young people and employers. We are also investing more in children's services to set them on a sustainable trajectory and have announced new funding for kinship care and fostering to keep children safe and provide family security for our most vulnerable children.

Free Schools: Bedford**Blake Stephenson:**[\[11188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the planned free school in Bedford Borough is under review by her Department.

Stephen Morgan:

The government wants to ensure children achieve and thrive in education, whatever type of school they are in, including free schools. School capacity varies from place to place, and demand for places varies from area to area and year to year, so the department will continue to ensure the opening of new schools only where they are needed.

Departmental officials are working with local authorities, academy trusts and other partners to take forward work on the review of mainstream free school projects over

the autumn and have written to them, setting out the next steps in relation to individual projects.

■ Further Education: Recruitment

John Slinger:

[\[901022\]](#)

What steps her Department is taking to help further education colleges recruit vocational teachers from industry.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises that industry experience is vital in the high quality teaching of vocational and technical education.

The national further education teacher recruitment campaign, "Share Your Skills", targets those with industry skills to think about a career in FE teaching. Through Taking Teaching Further (TTF), a two-year programme that supports FE providers to recruit and provide early career support to those with industry knowledge and experience, we are supporting colleges to equip new teachers with the skills they need. In addition the Teacher Mentoring Programme is helping to improve retention of early career teachers providing mentoring and wellbeing support.

We are delivering payments worth up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career teachers in key STEM and technical subjects in FE colleges, which could include those transitioning to teaching from industry. Furthermore, we continue to offer financial incentives for those undertaking teacher training for the FE sector in priority subject areas. For the academic year 2024 to 2025, training bursaries are worth up to £30,000 each, tax free.

■ Private Education: VAT

Mark Pritchard:

[\[11162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of imposing VAT on independent school fees on access to independent schools' sports facilities for state sector pupils.

Stephen Morgan:

The VAT treatment of the hiring or letting out of facilities will not change as a result of the decision to impose VAT on private school fees. HM Revenue and Customs have published guidance on charging and/or reclaiming VAT on goods and services related to private school fees, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charging-and-reclaiming-vat-on-goods-and-services-related-to-private-school-fees>.

In addition, in line with their charitable objectives, private schools demonstrate public benefit through partnerships with schools in the state sector. The government expects private schools to continue to work with schools in the state sector to demonstrate public benefit in this way. The government does not expect the imposition of VAT on school fees to reduce the efforts that private schools invest in their partnership working with state-funded schools.

■ Pupils: Attendance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of recent trends in the level of school attendance in (a) the South East and (b) England in the last 12 months.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure children with high school absence rates are supported to increase their attendance in (a) the South East and (b) Slough constituency.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of persistent school absence rates in the last 12 months.

Stephen Morgan:

Detailed pupil absence data is collected as part of the school census and published on a termly basis. All absence data for England, including data at Regional and Local Authority level, is available via the National Statistics releases: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/>.

Data from 2022/23 shows that Slough had an overall absence rate of 7.6%, which was above the national rate of 7.4% and the regional rate of 7.3%. A similar trend was observed in the persistently absent data for these areas, as shown here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/a7dbf68f-64f1-4029-e937-08dcf7e7048c>.

The government recognises school absence as a key barrier to learning. If children are not in school, they will not benefit from teaching and learning, regardless of how effective or well-supported it is. Missing school regularly is harmful to a child's attainment, safety and physical and mental health, limiting their opportunity to succeed. Thanks to the sector's efforts, more students are attending school this year compared to last. However, 1.6 million children remain persistently absent, missing 10% or more of lessons.

The department has a national strategy for tackling absence impacting all schools, including those in the South East and within the Slough constituency. Central to this are stronger expectations of local authorities and schools, as set out in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which was made statutory in August 2024. The guidance promotes a support first approach, encouraging schools, trusts, and local authorities to work with families to address attendance barriers.

Every state school in England should now be sharing their daily attendance register data with the department, local authorities and trusts. These bodies can access this data through a secure, interactive dashboard maintained by the department, allowing them to target attendance interventions more effectively.

The department recognises the importance of creating opportunities to share existing best practice within the sector on how to improve attendance. Across the nation there is a network of 31 attendance hubs, working with 2000 schools to share to share their strategies and resources for improving attendance.

In addition to this work, the department aims to improve the existing evidence on which interventions work to improve attendance. Over £17 million is being invested across two mentoring projects that will support at least 12,000 pupils in 15 areas. These programmes will be evaluated and the effective practice shared with schools and local authorities nationally.

The attendance strategy is also supported by broader investments, including funded breakfast clubs which will be provided for all primary schools to ensure children start their day ready to learn. The department will also introduce new annual Ofsted reviews focusing on safeguarding, attendance, and off-rolling. Mental health support is also being expanded, with a specialist now available in every school. Additionally, schools can allocate pupil premium funding, which has been increased to over £2.9 billion for the 2024/25 financial year, to support pupils with identified needs.

■ Schools: Labour Turnover

Warinder Juss:

[R] [\[901021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve school staff recruitment and retention.

Bridget Phillipson:

High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education. There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state-funded schools in England, but we must do more to ensure we have the workforce needed to provide the best possible education for every child in all parts of the country, which is why the government has set out the first step of its opportunity mission, to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

Teachers are supported by a range of staff that help drive high standards and ensure we give children the best possible life chances. We have laid the groundwork for the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, thereby recognising and championing the vital role support staff play in schools across the country. The Body was scrapped in 2010 by the previous government. In the first hundred days, this government has legislated to bring it back.

We are committed to resetting the relationship with the education workforce and working alongside them to re-establish teaching as an attractive, expert profession. Work has already begun to recruit 6,500 new teachers with the expansion of our flagship teacher recruitment campaign, and we will focus on getting more teachers into shortage subjects and supporting areas that face the largest recruitment challenges. We are offering retention payments worth up to £6,000 for teachers in years 1 to 5 teaching physics, mathematics, chemistry and computer science in disadvantaged schools.

The first crucial step towards achieving this is to ensure teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession and teachers get the pay they deserve, which is why we have accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from September.

Alongside teacher pay, financial incentives are an effective way to increase teacher supply, and we are continuing to support teacher trainees with tax-free bursaries of up to £29,000 and scholarships of up to £31,000 in shortage subjects. To help with retention, new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing, in the first five years of their careers, also receive retention payments if working in disadvantaged schools.

The department is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion in additional funding, in the financial year 2024/25, to support schools with overall costs. This matches what we have calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the teacher pay award, and the support staff pay offer in financial year 2024/25, after accounting for the overall available headroom in schools' existing budgets.

■ Schools: Mid Bedfordshire

Blake Stephenson:

[11189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to replace capital funding originally allocated to (a) Arnold Academy, (b) Parkfields Middle School, (c) Toddington St. George Church of England School, and (d) The Firs Lower School in Mid Bedfordshire constituency through the Condition Improvement Fund.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has written to the responsible bodies to encourage them to reapply to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), which opened for applications for the 2025/26 round on 22 October 2024. The bodies should closely review the guidance and all the documents provided in support of their application to ensure their appropriateness as evidence of project need.

In cases of an urgent building condition issue that cannot wait for funding in the current CIF round, schools can apply for Urgent Capital Support funding. More details on both funding routes are available on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund>.

■ Schools: Transport

Chris Ward:

[901015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of revising the eligibility rules for free school transport.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's home to school travel policy aims to make sure that no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home to school travel for children of compulsory school age, 5 to 16, who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the

distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so. There are extended rights to free travel for children from low-income families.

I am keen to understand how well home to school transport supports children to access educational opportunity and will be working with departmental officials on this.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Poverty**

Debbie Abrahams:

[901019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure that the requirements of children with special educational needs and disabilities are included in the child poverty strategy.

Bridget Phillipson:

Tackling child poverty is at the heart of breaking down barriers to opportunity and improving the life chances for every child. For too many children, living in poverty robs them of the opportunity to achieve and thrive.

On 23 October 2024 the government published 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing Our Strategy'. This report sets out how the government will develop the strategy, including an engagement plan, which will harness all available levers to deliver a reduction in child poverty this Parliament as part of an ambitious ten-year Strategy. The report is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-poverty-developing-our-strategy>.

As part of the Taskforce's engagement plan, a new forum of parents and carers living across the UK will be set up to ensure the experiences of children in poverty, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, are included. They will feed directly into the Strategy.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ **Biofuels: Vegetable Oils**

David Smith:

[11717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to make a decision on the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil fuel in homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

As sustainable biomass is a limited resource, the Government expects to prioritise its use in sectors like aviation, and potentially the small number of homes unsuitable for heat pumps, as these sectors have fewest options to decarbonise. The cost of renewable liquid heating fuels is currently much higher than other fuels available to off grid customers. Before taking decisions on whether to support the use of renewable liquid fuels, like hydrotreated vegetable oil, in heating, the Government would require stronger evidence on their affordability for consumers, and the availability of sustainable feedstocks.

■ Carbon Emissions

Mark Swards:

[\[11119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to regulate emissions produced by organisations.

Sarah Jones:

The UK Emissions Trading Scheme is an essential regime to cut emissions and drive green investment. By setting a limit - the cap - on emissions and creating a carbon price for power, industry and aviation, the scheme incentivises investment in clean technologies that will power and supply the economy of the future. The UK ETS Authority is currently evaluating responses to recent consultations on expanding the scheme. Further energy audit and reporting policies, including the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme and Streamlining Energy and Carbon Reporting, require disclosure of specified energy and emissions information by large or listed UK businesses.

Mark Garnier:

[\[11274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential supply chain barriers to achieving net zero by 2030.

Kerry McCarthy:

Through our Clean Energy Mission the Government will decarbonise the power system by 2030 and accelerate to net zero. Taking action to ensure that our clean energy supply chains are resilient is a priority, both in terms of delivery against our targets and maximizing associated growth benefits.

We have a number of levers to support clean energy supply chains, including the new modern Industrial Strategy, the National Wealth Fund, and Great British Energy. In August, we commissioned the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to provide advice on achieving clean power by 2030. The advice will inform the Government's 2030 Clean Power Action Plan, expected to be published by the end of the year.

■ Carbon Emissions: Rural Areas

Edward Morello:

[\[11477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help support communities in rural areas to access (a) funding and (b) other incentives for net-zero projects.

Kerry McCarthy:

Government recognises the important role community groups play in our efforts to tackle climate change and offers support for the sector. Great British Energy's Local Power Plan will support communities to roll out small and medium scale renewable energy projects, providing commercial, technical and project-planning assistance, increasing their capability and capacity to build a pipeline of successful projects in their local areas. Government also supports the sector through the £10 million Community Energy Fund, which allows both rural and urban communities across

England to access grant funding to develop local renewable energy projects for investment.

■ **Carbon Emissions: West Dorset**

Edward Morello: [\[11508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support local businesses in West Dorset Constituency to access (a) funding and (b) incentives for local net-zero projects.

Kerry McCarthy:

Small and medium-sized businesses can visit the UK Business Climate Hub, which is run in partnership with Government, for advice and support on reducing emissions.

Climate Change Agreements provide tax discounts for businesses reducing their emissions, and the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund supports industrial sites with high energy use to transition.

■ **Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Green Finance Institute and Lisbet Rausing**

John Glen: [\[11265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) officials in his Department have had discussions with (i) the Green Finance Institute and (ii) Lisbet Rausing since 5 July 2024.

Michael Shanks:

Details of Ministers' and Permanent Secretaries' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Published declarations include the purpose of the meeting and the names of any additional external organisations or individuals in attendance.

■ **Energy Bills Discount Scheme: Buckinghamshire**

Callum Anderson: [\[11411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number and proportion of small businesses that will benefit from the Energy Bill Discount Scheme in (a) Buckinghamshire and (b) Milton Keynes, between 28 October 2024 and 31 March 2025.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Energy Bills Discount Scheme closed on 31 March 2024, and so no businesses will benefit from the scheme during this time.

■ Energy Supply

Brian Leishman:

[\[11496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department provides (a) subsidies and (b) other financial assistance to types of energy production in the UK.

Michael Shanks:

Yes, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero does provide subsidies and other financial assistance to types of energy production in the UK.

■ Energy Supply: Carbon Emissions

Mark Garnier:

[\[11273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the full system costs of (a) investments in renewable energy, (b) grid infrastructure upgrades, (c) energy storage solutions and (d) other costs associated with achieving a Net Zero power grid by 2030.

Michael Shanks:

On 23 August, the Government commissioned the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to provide practical advice on achieving a clean power system by 2030. The Government expects to receive NESO's advice in early November, which will inform the 2030 Clean Power Action Plan, due for publication by the end of the year. The Action Plan will contain details relating to the costs associated with achieving the Government's Clean Power 2030 ambitions.

■ Energy: Billing

Tracy Gilbert:

[\[11367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what support his Department is providing to small and medium sized enterprises for energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government recognises that some businesses may be struggling to pay their bills.

The Government believes that the only way to protect billpayers permanently, including small and medium sized enterprises, is to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels and towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy and have less reliance on volatile international energy markets and help in our commitment to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030.

For non-domestic consumers who agreed to contracts at very expensive rates at the peak of price spikes, I recommend that they contact their supplier to enquire about 'blend and extend' contracts. These contracts blend the original, higher, unit rate with a new lower rate, spreading the cost over the course of an extended contract lifetime.

■ Energy: Prices**Tracy Gilbert:**[\[11368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to regulate non-domestic energy prices.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government does not currently have plans to introduce an energy price cap for non-domestic energy consumers.

The Government believes the only way to protect billpayers permanently, including non-domestic organisations, is to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels and towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy and have less reliance on volatile international energy markets and help in our commitment to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030.

From 19 December we are expanding the remit of the Energy Ombudsman services so that small business consumers with fewer than 50 employees can resolve issues with their supplier through this service. This expands the level of support to 99% of businesses in Great Britain. In September we also launched a public consultation on regulating Third Party Intermediaries for non-domestic consumers, seeking views on different potential regulatory options for this market.

Heat network consumers are not currently protected by the energy price cap, that is why the Government is introducing regulations to give them comparable protections that existing gas and electricity regulations provide. We are appointing Ofgem as heat network regulator who will have the power to intervene if prices appear to be disproportionate or unfair.

Mr Lee Dillon:[\[11694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support people to pay their energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that the only way to guarantee our energy security and protect billpayers permanently is to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels and towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy and have less reliance on volatile international energy markets, and help in our commitment to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides an annual £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households.

I have met with energy suppliers and encouraged them to build on the Voluntary Debt Commitment for this winter, and we are continuing to work with suppliers to ensure consumers are supported this winter.

Mr Lee Dillon:

[11697]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring electric vehicle owners to pay the same energy prices as people with storage heaters.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is supportive of electricity suppliers offering tariffs which incentivise consumers, including electric vehicle owners, to consume energy at off peak times, as this benefits all consumers by reducing the need for additional grid capacity.

The Government is working with Ofgem to ensure that tariffs, such as Economy 7 tariffs used by households with storage heaters, are priced fairly. This includes ensuring there is an appropriate price cap for Economy 7 tariffs.

■ Energy: Storage

Mr Luke Charters:

[11184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of battery energy storage systems.

Michael Shanks:

Battery energy storage systems (BESS) have a key role in cost-effectively decarbonising the power sector by 2030. They help to balance the electricity system at lower cost by maximising the output from intermittent low carbon generation (such as solar and wind) and minimising both network upgrades and the need for new infrastructure.

The Department's analysis indicates that short-duration flexibility offered by technologies including battery storage, could support up to 24,000 jobs (1) and reduce energy system costs by up to £10bn per year by 2050 (2) through minimising the need for new peaking generation and network assets.

[1]

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5dc589f8e5274a4f497bc49f/energy-innovation-needs-assessment-smart-systems.pdf>

[2]

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60f57aade90e0764cd98a0a3/smart-systems-appendix-i-electricity-system-flexibility-modelling.pdf>

■ Heating: Costs

Mr Lee Dillon:

[11696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the cost of storage heaters on the elderly population.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Whilst dedicated analysis on the cost of storage heaters in homes occupied by the elderly has not been carried out, broader analysis by the Department

(<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/632038fee90e077dba7762a6/CODE-Final-Report-WHOLE-FINAL-v20.pdf>) has shown that high retention storage heaters coupled with a time-of-use tariff can be one of the lowest-cost forms of electric heating, particularly for smaller properties with low heat demand such as small flats. However, their competitiveness diminishes in larger properties such as an average house, where heat pumps become the cheapest low carbon option.

■ Heating: Housing

Mr Lee Dillon:

[11695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department plans to take to provide more (a) sustainable and (b) cost-effective energy options for home heating.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

We are taking steps to address a range of barriers to mass deployment of heat pumps, which include improving consumer awareness, building resilient supply chains, improving affordability and growing our understanding of the potential future requirements for electricity generation and network reinforcement, and how these might be met cost effectively and practicably.

Our Warm Homes Plan will also transform homes across the country by making them cleaner and cheaper to run, from installing new insulation to rolling out solar and heat pumps.

■ Heating: West Dorset

Edward Morello:

[11475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) administrative and (b) financial support to help rural off-grid households switch to low-carbon heating solutions in West Dorset.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The 'Find Ways to Save Energy in Your Home' tool on Gov.uk provides homeowners, including those living off the gas grid, with impartial and tailored advice on how to retrofit their homes. The website can be accessed at the following link:

www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency.

Regarding financial support for upgrades, there are a number of schemes providing financial assistance to help rural off-grid households switch to low carbon heating including the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, Home Upgrade Grant, Energy Company Obligation and the Great British Insulation scheme. We have also announced a new Warm Homes: Local Grant, with delivery expected in 2025.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme: Investment

Josh Newbury:

[11067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) returning the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme investment reserve to scheme members and (b) commissioning a review into future investment reserve surplus sharing arrangements.

Sarah Jones:

The Government has ended the injustice of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme (MPS) and agreed the transfer the Investment Reserve Fund to members, so that the mineworkers who powered our country receive a fairer pension.

The resulting bonus will increase pensions by 32% and should start to be paid in November. The Government will soon start talks with the MPS Trustees on the future arrangements for surplus sharing.

■ National Grid: Electric Cables

Sir John Hayes:

[11157]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials have held recent discussions with National Grid on the viability of using an underground cable system instead of pylons as part of the great grid upgrade.

Michael Shanks:

The Government's policy on undergrounding is set out in the energy National Policy Statement for electricity networks (EN-5), which sets a strong starting presumption of overhead lines, except in nationally designated landscapes, where undergrounding is the starting presumption.

Details of Ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK

■ Refineries: Grangemouth

Brian Leishman:

[11494]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that refined oil products imported via Grangemouth are not sourced from Russia.

Michael Shanks:

The import, acquisition, supply and delivery of Russian oil and oil products into the UK has been banned since 5 December 2022, with the last cargo of primary oils arriving from Russia in October 2022 and finished products in November 2022. ([Energy Trends Table 3.14](#)). All importers of oil and oil products into the UK must provide proof of origin to demonstrate that goods are not of Russian origin to enforcement authorities.

The Government is committed to ensuring that third countries are not used by Russia to evade sanctions and will continue to keep sanctions under review.

■ Renewable Energy: Investment

Mark Garnier: [\[11260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the National Energy System Operator's proposals to prioritise energy projects that are ready and aligned with Clean Power 2030 on investor confidence in the UK renewables sector.

Mark Garnier: [\[11261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the National Energy System Operator's reforms to the grid connections process on investment in the UK renewables sector.

Michael Shanks:

The National Energy System Operator (NESO) is responsible for preparing and submitting proposals for reform of the electricity network connections process to Ofgem, the independent energy regulator. NESO is engaging with stakeholders, including the renewables sector as it develops these proposals. When making its decision, Ofgem will undertake an Impact Assessment of proposals.

■ Renewable Energy: Standing Charges

Sarah Hall: [\[11461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing levels of standing charges paid by consumers who mainly use energy generated by their own solar panels and wind turbines.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Standing charges cover the costs energy suppliers take on to provide consumers with electricity, which vary by location, and although these levies are a commercial matter for suppliers, and are regulated by Ofgem, we know that too much of the burden of the bill is placed on them.

The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them. Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving some supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated. Ofgem's publication can be found here: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/call-for-input/standing-charges-domestic-retail-options>.

We will continue to support Ofgem in this work and ensure that standing charges are reduced.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Derbyshire****Samantha Niblett:****[11466]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the economic contribution of farming in Derbyshire.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra does not produce county level estimates of the economic contribution of farming so no estimates are available for Derbyshire. Estimates are only available at regional level.

The total income from farming for the East Midlands region (which includes Derbyshire) in 2023 was £835 million. Full details are available here: [Total Income from Farming in the regions of England in 2023 - GOV.UK](#).

■ Bluetongue Disease: Shropshire**Mark Pritchard:****[11161]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of Blue Tongue virus livestock cases in Shropshire.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra acted quickly to contain bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV-3) when the first case this season was detected on 26 August, implementing zones with movement controls on susceptible livestock to prevent spread. These disease control restrictions have been adapted in response to new findings and there is now a single restricted zone (RZ) covering the east coast and some inland areas in England.

The movement of susceptible animals from the RZ to live elsewhere in England requires a specific licence and is subject to free pre-movement and post-movement testing. This helps to prevent the possible establishment of new pockets of disease from undetected spread via animal movements.

BTV-3 was confirmed on a single farm in Shropshire on 3 October, following the high-risk movement of cattle from the RZ.

Infected animals in cases found in free areas outside the restricted zone that moved before the RZ was declared, have also been humanely culled to minimise the risk of onward transmission.

Defra has permitted the use of vaccines for BTV-3. These vaccines are now available for vets to prescribe in England.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control**Sarah Champion:****[9182]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many culled badger carcasses have tested positive for TB since 2013; what plans his Department has

for the number of badgers to be culled up to January 2026; and of those how many and what proportion will be tested for TB.

Daniel Zeichner:

On 30 August, the Government announced the start of work on a comprehensive new strategy for England, to drive down bovine TB rates to save cattle and farmers' livelihoods and end the badger cull by the end of this parliament. This will be undertaken in co-design with farmers, vets, scientists and conservationists, ensuring the new strategy marks a significant step-change in approach to tackling this devastating disease.

The published policy guidance as introduced by the previous Government does not require routine post-mortem examinations on badgers removed under culling licences issued in the High Risk and Edge Areas of England. There are no plans to change this guidance, with existing cull processes agreed by the previous Government being honoured to ensure clarity for farmers, while new measures can be rolled out through the work on a new bovine TB eradication strategy.

Information on the number of culled badgers that have been previously tested under licences in the High Risk and Edge Area can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-surveillance-in-wildlife-in-england>.

Information on the number of culled badgers that have been tested (including the proportion positive for *Mycobacterium bovis*) in the Low Risk Area is published annually on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-hotspots-in-the-low-risk-area-of-england>.

■ **Coastal Erosion**

Edward Morello: **[11479]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of coastal erosion on (a) agricultural land and (b) rural infrastructure.

Edward Morello: **[11481]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the risk of coastal erosion on (a) agricultural land and (b) rural infrastructure.

Emma Hardy:

England has some of the most rapidly eroding coast in Europe due to natural processes. Climate change, sea level rise and increased storminess will increase the rate of change, which will threaten the resilience of coastal communities if no action is taken.

In January 2025, the Environment Agency (EA) will publish the updated [National Coastal Erosion Risk Map for England](#). This is based on a further ten years of coastal

monitoring data, the latest climate change evidence and technical input from coastal local authorities. It will provide the best available information on coastal erosion risk and be used by coastal local authorities and the EA to inform coastal management investment and local planning decisions.

The new data and map will include coastal erosion projections through this century, including the effects of climate change and provide an updated assessment of properties, infrastructure and agricultural land at risk. It takes account of the latest coastal management approaches set out in Shoreline Management Plans.

To ensure we protect the country from the devastating impacts of flooding, we will invest £2.4 billion over the next two years to improve flood resilience, by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences. We are investing £36 million supporting local authorities in East Riding of Yorkshire, North Norfolk and Dorset to explore innovative approaches in adapting to the effects of coastal erosion.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of staff employed by his Department have experience in farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ **Dogs: Animal Breeding**

Sarah Hall:

[\[11462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on banning puppy farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in our manifesto, we will bring an end to puppy farming. We are considering the most effective way to deliver this commitment and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ **Dogs: Electronic Training Aids**

Sarah Champion:

[\[11299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to ban the use of electronic shock collars in dog training.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation and will bring forward plans in due course. Ministers will be considering

available evidence around the use of hand-controlled e-collars and their effects on the welfare of animals.

■ **Electronic Training Aids**

Alex McIntyre: [\[11798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ban the use of shock collars.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation and will bring forward plans in due course. Ministers will be considering available evidence around the use of hand-controlled e-collars and their effects on the welfare of animals.

■ **Environment Protection: Shopping**

Andrew Bowie: [\[11327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the environmental impact of consumers shopping locally; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact on net zero targets if consumers are unable to shop locally.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Secretary of State recognises the importance of consumers having access to local shops for environmental sustainability and for supporting net zero goals. The Secretary of State, Defra Ministers and officials meet regularly with retailers where discussions have included to understand initiatives to support efforts that enable consumers to shop locally.

■ **Food: Production**

Andrew Bowie: [\[11326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support farmers to increase the (a) volume and (b) variety of fruit and vegetables they produce.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government appreciates and values the vital work of the horticulture industry and recognises its role in maintaining a secure food supply. As part of our mission-driven government, and in partnership with the sector, we are considering how best to support our fruit and vegetable growers in the future to achieve our ambitious, measurable, and long-term goals for the sector.

Innovation, such as the development of new crop varieties and growing systems, has added to the huge range of top quality and nutritious fruit and vegetables already grown in the UK, and has allowed our growers to extend the growing seasons of a variety of crops, for example strawberries.

We also continue to support long-term Genetic Improvement Networks (GINs) to improve crop varieties by developing traits to improve their nutritional quality, and enhance productivity levels, sustainability and resilience.

■ Food: Waste

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[11830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of whether the UK meet the UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 target.

Mary Creagh:

The Department has made no recent assessment of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 target of a 50% reduction of food waste by 2030.

Latest data from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) showed that between 2007, the baseline used for reporting food waste progress, and 2021, UK per capita food waste fell by 26kg per person per year, representing an 18.3% reduction. To meet the Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 target of a 50% reduction by 2030, a further 45kg per person reduction or 32% of the baseline will be required.

■ Forest Products: Regulation

Ellie Chowns:

[\[11679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish regulations to implement Schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021 to introduce a due diligence scheme for products of illegal deforestation.

Mary Creagh:

We recognise the need to take action to ensure that UK consumption of forest risk commodities is not driving deforestation, and we will set out our approach to addressing this in due course.

■ Fur (Import and Sale) Bill

Steve Race:

[\[11388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Fur (Import and Sale) Bill.

Irene Campbell:

[\[11632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will support the Fur (Import and Sale) Bill.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is continuing to build the evidence base on the fur sector. This includes commissioning our expert Animal Welfare Committee on what constitutes responsible sourcing of fur. The report that they produce will support our understanding of the fur industry and help inform our next steps.

In accordance with parliamentary convention, the Government will set out its formal position on this Bill when it receives its Second Reading.

■ Hazardous Substances: Waste Disposal

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[10740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of hazardous waste was exported by the type of hazardous waste in the latest period for which data is available.

Mary Creagh:

The regulation of hazardous waste is a devolved matter, and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Waste exports are reported using a different classification system to domestic movements of hazardous wastes. The two datasets are therefore not directly comparable meaning the precise information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

In 2023, 6,017,823 Tonnes of Hazardous waste were produced in England. Of this, 256,518 Tonnes (4%) was exported for treatment and recovery overseas. There are robust systems and processes in place to ensure that these wastes go to the right place and are treated appropriately.

The top 5 categories of hazardous waste exported overseas from England are as follows:

WASTE TYPE	TONNAGE EXPORTED
Waste mineral oils unfit for their originally intended use	97,846 Tonnes
Waste lead-acid batteries, whole or crushed	31,490 Tonnes
Wastes from the production, formulation and use of inks, dyes, pigments, paints, lacquers, varnish	20,894 Tonnes
Wastes containing Heavy metals	14,769 Tonnes
Wastes from production, formulation and use of resins, latex, plasticisers, glues/adhesives	10,540 Tonnes

■ Hunting

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[11537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on preparing legislation to ban trail hunting.

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[11538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to introduce legislation to ban trail hunting.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter with regard to Scotland and Northern Ireland; hunting with dogs is a reserved matter with respect to Wales and therefore, the information provided relates to England and Wales only.

The Government made a manifesto commitment to ban Trail Hunting as part of a set of measures to improve animal welfare. Work to determine the best approach for doing so is ongoing. Further announcements will be made in due course.

■ **Inland Border Facilities: Ashford**

Clive Jones:

[\[11483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding he plans to allocate to the Sevington border control post in each of the next five financial years.

Daniel Zeichner:

Operating costs for the Government-run Sevington border control post are designed to be recovered by the Common User Charge (CUC)

The Government will keep the CUC rates under review and will continue to consider the impact of the charge on businesses of all sizes across all sectors. Regular reviews will be undertaken to monitor levels of payment compliance and import flows through the short straits.

Further information on the charge and the operating costs at Sevington will be made available in due course.

■ **Land Use: Departmental Coordination**

Ellie Chowns:

[\[10879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 September 2024 to Question 4844 on Land Use, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of establishing a national land use authority to work on a cross-departmental basis on the proposed land use framework for the purpose of integrating government priorities on (a) housing, (b) energy infrastructure, (c) farming, (d) community ownership and (e) other related matters.

Mary Creagh:

The Government will publish a consultation on land use to inform the publication of a Land Use Framework for England. The land use framework will support farmers and nature recovery, based on an evidence base and spatial analysis. We will set out our approach to governance in due course.

■ National Landscapes: Environment Protection

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[11126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the implementation of further protections for (a) nature and (b) biodiversity in National Landscapes.

Mary Creagh:

The new Government is committed to making Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) greener, wilder, and more accessible. We are currently considering the best way to do this. To support this, Defra is working with Protected Landscapes organisations to improve data on the state of nature in Protected Landscapes.

■ Nutrients

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[11128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to meet the UK's commitment under the Global Biodiversity Framework to reduce excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half by 2030.

Mary Creagh:

Policy in this area is a devolved matter.

The UK Government recognises the need to go further on addressing nutrient pollution and supporting nature to recover.

We have already committed to a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan which will set out how the Government will deliver our legally binding targets, including for reducing nutrient pollution.

We are taking action to work with partners to tackle the main sources of pollution. For example, we are taking action to tackle agricultural pollution and deliver the Environment Act target through a suite of proportionate and effective regulations, advice and incentives.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Sir Alec Shelbrooke: [\[10980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the cost of the introduction of extended producer responsibility fees to businesses.

Mary Creagh:

The Department's impact assessment published online [here](#) has considered the impacts on businesses from the introduction of extended producer responsibility for packaging (pEPR).

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[10981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what body will administer the non-household packaging elements of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme; and when he plans to publish details of that body.

Mary Creagh:

Obligations on non-household packaging elements of the upcoming Extended Producer Responsibility scheme will continue to be enforced by the Environment Agency in England and the equivalent regulators in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as these obligations are in the current producer responsibility scheme.

■ Poultry: Animal Housing

James Naish:

[\[11355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to consult on phasing out the use of cages for layer hens in England.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the hon. Member to the reply previously given to the hon. Member for Wokingham, Clive Jones, on 31 October 2024, PQ UIN [11121](#).

■ Rivers: Derbyshire

Samantha Niblett:

[\[9320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the water quality of the river ways in (a) Derbyshire and (b) South Derbyshire constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Cleaning up England's rivers, lakes and seas is a priority for the Government. The Government has taken immediate and substantial action to address water companies who are not performing for the environment or their customers.

In September, the Government introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill to give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action to crack down on water companies damaging the environment and failing their customers.

I would also refer the hon. Member to the Written Statement made by the Secretary of State on 18 July, [HCWS3](#).

The majority of the Derbyshire catchment is currently classified as moderate water quality for ecological status.

In May, the Environment Agency (EA) confirmed a tougher inspections and enforcement regime that will be backed by at least £55 million each year and will make better use of data analytics and technology. This will be fully funded through a combination of increased grant-in-aid from Defra to the EA and additional funding from water company permit charges.

■ Tree Planting

Edward Morello:

[\[11482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage afforestation projects to (a) enhance biodiversity and (b) reduce carbon emissions.

Mary Creagh:

Total tree planting and woodland creation reached over 5,500 hectares in England in 2023/24.

All publicly subsidised afforestation projects must comply with the UK Forestry Standards (UKFS) requirements. The UKFS has been developed specifically for forestry in the UK and is based on applying internationally agreed criteria which support the delivery of sustainable forest management and recognise the need to balance environmental, economic and social objectives.

The England Woodland Creation Offer includes supplements that incentivise the creation of native woodland with high biodiversity potential. Biodiversity Net Gain also offers opportunities to create new woodlands that enhance biodiversity.

■ Tree Planting: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[11227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees were planted in (a) South Holland district and (b) South Kesteven district in the last ten years.

Mary Creagh:

The Forestry Commission publishes statistics on new planting of woodland, and trees outside woodland, in England. These can be found in [Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators](#). These statistics are reported for each financial year in thousands of hectares.

This Government has not set specific targets for individual districts and the reporting statistic the hon. Member has requested is not currently available.

The England Trees Action Plan has kickstarted tree planting, with nearly 16 million trees planted over the past 3 years. We reported 5,529 hectares of new woodland and trees outside of woodland planted in 2023-24. The figures for planting in 2024-25 will be published as part of Official Statistics in June 2025.

■ Veterinary Medicine

Alex Mayer:

[\[11365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of trends in the level of availability of veterinary surgeons; and what steps his Department is taking to help increase the capacity of veterinary surgeons.

Daniel Zeichner:

We appreciate the incredibly valuable work completed by veterinary surgeons and recognise their essential role in achieving our ambitious goals of upholding high standards of animal welfare, supporting trade, and safeguarding public health and food security. The Government acknowledges the high demand for veterinary services and is working collaboratively across departments and with the profession to explore additional measures that will ensure sufficient staffing levels to support and sustain the sector effectively.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Internet****Clive Jones:**[\[11489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Mauritian counterpart on the future of the .io country code top-level domain.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary has not had any discussions with his Mauritian counterpart on the future of the .io country code top-level domain. The Government does not have any role in the management of the .io country code top-level domain. Decisions regarding the management of country code top-level domains are a matter for the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA).

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[10968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reports that the British High Commissioner to Mauritius' phone conversations were leaked; and if he will review the effectiveness of negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Stephen Doughty:

The reported event occurred prior to the launch of negotiations in November 2022.

This is the subject of an ongoing police investigation in Mauritius, and we are unable to provide further comment.

■ Chelsea Football Club: Sales**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[11228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Portuguese counterpart on distributing the proceeds generated from the sale of Chelsea FC to support the victims of the invasion of Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

His Majesty's Government continues to hold discussions with the Portuguese Government, as part of our efforts to ensure the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as quickly as possible, in line with the UK's unilateral declaration. The Government is fully committed to that position, as part of our iron-clad support for Ukraine.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:[\[11229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the European Union on distributing the proceeds generated from the sale of Chelsea FC to support the victims of the invasion of Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government continues to hold discussions with the European Commission, as part of our efforts to ensure the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as quickly as possible, in line with the UK's unilateral declaration. The Government is fully committed to that position, as part of our iron-clad support for Ukraine.

China: British Nationals Abroad**Chris Law:**[\[11316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2024 to Question 8831 on China and Hong Kong, what steps he plans to take to ensure that British-born children of British nationals with Hong Kong descent who are exclusively British citizens are not treated as Chinese nationals by the People's Republic of China; and what steps his Department is taking to safeguard their consular rights and protections under international conventions when travelling to or residing in China.

Catherine West:

The FCDO provides consular assistance to British nationals abroad. In some cases, British Nationals of Hong Kong or Chinese descent may be considered Chinese by the Chinese authorities meaning the consular assistance we can provide may be limited. As per our nationality guidance, we advise seeking legal advice where appropriate for individual cases.

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**Neil Coyle:**[\[11857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international partners to help support (a) the Egyptian Red Crescent and (b) other aid organisations to increase the amount of humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is intolerable. The UK continues to provide significant funding to partners to support those most in need, including £5.5m in

additional funding for UK-Med to run field hospitals in Gaza, and an additional £6m for UNICEF to provide lifesaving aid to vulnerable families in Gaza. In October and November 2023, we provided support to the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERCS) to strengthen their operations to get aid into Gaza. This included providing enabling equipment to support the international response at Al-Arish including mobile storage units, forklift trucks, pallet trucks and lighting generators. We continue to play a leading role in alleviating the suffering in Gaza, including by matching up to £10 million of public donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Middle East humanitarian appeal.

■ Government Hospitality: Spirits and Wines

John Glen:

[\[10993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2067 on Government Hospitality: Wines, what the (a) full name, (b) vintage and (c) cost was of each (i) wine and (ii) spirit that has been used for hospitality in Downing Street since the general election.

Catherine West:

The Government Wine Cellar has not been used for hospitality at Downing Street since the general election.

■ Israel: Occupied Territories

Richard Burgon:

[\[10451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release entitled UK statement on the ICJ's Advisory Opinion on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, published on 19 July 2024, when he plans to release his Department's final response.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK does not disagree with the central findings of the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the 'Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem'. We are of the clear view that Israel should bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible - but we are clear that every effort must be made to create the conditions for negotiations towards the two-state solution. Our commitment to a two-state solution is unwavering. The UK abstained on the UN General Assembly resolution in September because it did not provide sufficient clarity to advance a negotiated two-state solution. The UK respects the independence of the ICJ.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Laura Kyrke-Smith:**[\[10587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support peacebuilding efforts by Israeli and Palestinian civil society.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

This government has been clear; we are committed to pursuing a lasting solution to the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict, including through achieving a two-state solution. We continue to support efforts to this end through our aid programmes, which assist civil society in Israel and Palestine on a range of issues, including peacebuilding and conflict resolution. We further support grassroots local peacebuilding efforts between Israeli and Palestinian civil society, for example on more inclusive and conflict-sensitive journalism.

■ Israel: UNRWA**Rachel Blake:**[\[11492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Israeli legislation on the (a) status and (b) operation of UNRWA on the humanitarian situation in (i) Gaza and (ii) the West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As the Foreign Secretary said in his statement to the House on 28 October, the UK is gravely concerned at legislation against United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) passed by Israel's Knesset. This risks making UNRWA's essential work providing humanitarian aid to Palestinians impossible, jeopardising the entire international humanitarian response in Gaza and delivery of essential health and education services in the West Bank. We have joined with our partners in expressing our concerns, issuing a joint statement with partners on 27 October. The Foreign Secretary reiterated his deep concern to Israel's Foreign Minister Katz on 27 October. We will continue working with our international partners and through the UN to press Israel to ensure that UNRWA can continue its vital operations.

Melanie Ward:[\[11675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Israeli legislation in relation to UNRWA on (a) his Department's policies and (b) the provision of UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have expressed serious concern at the UNRWA bills that Israel's Knesset has now passed. This legislation risks making UNRWA's essential work for Palestinians impossible, jeopardising the entire international humanitarian response in Gaza and delivery of essential health and

education services in the West Bank. The UK and six allies issued a joint statement on 27 October expressing our grave concern and urging Israel to ensure UNRWA can continue its lifesaving work. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this to Israel's Foreign Minister Katz on 27 October. We will continue working with our international partners and through the UN to press Israel to ensure that UNRWA can continue its vital operations.

■ **Palestinians: Disability**

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[10861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on evacuating disabled Palestinians so that they can receive treatment.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[10862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the potential merits of creating a medical corridor to enable disabled Palestinians in Northern Gaza to be treated in Southern Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The plight of sick, injured and disabled people in Gaza is deeply distressing. We have pressed Israel at senior levels to urgently establish sustained, safe and timely passage for patients who need medical or surgical interventions not available in Gaza. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories raised the issue of medical evacuations for injured Palestinians with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The UK is supporting the provision of essential healthcare to Palestinian civilians, including through field hospitals operated by UK-Med in Gaza, and through WHO Egypt to support medically evacuated Palestinians.

■ **Religious Freedom: International Cooperation**

Sammy Wilson:

[\[11163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department taking through the (a) UN, (b) 7 and (c) other multilaterals to support freedom of religion or belief globally.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK ensures Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) remains on the international platform through our multilateral engagement.

At the UN, we regularly take part in Interactive Dialogues with the UN Special Rapporteur for FoRB, most recently on 24 October. We also cosponsored a side event at the 57th session of the Human Rights Council on combatting intolerance.

At the 22nd G7 Speakers' Meeting in September, we actively engaged in drafting the resulting Declaration and were pleased to see a commitment to FoRB for all included.

We are an active member of the Article 18 Alliance, and recently attended the International Ministerial Conference on FoRB in Berlin. The UK delivered a national statement at the OSCE Warsaw Human Dimensions Conference, in October, on FoRB and fundamental freedoms.

■ USA: Elections

Rupert Lowe:

[\[10823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to maintain relations with the (a) Republican and (b) Democrat (i) candidate and (ii) Party (A) during and (B) after the US Presidential election.

Stephen Doughty:

The US is an indispensable ally. Our special relationship is crucial for security and prosperity and transcends whatever political parties and individuals are in office across and at all levels of the US system, from the White House to Congress and at State level. It is a core part of the FCDO's work to engage individuals from across the US political spectrum, including the Presidential campaigns. We have shared values and interests and will continue to work with the US on issues including economic co-operation, defence, intelligence and as key NATO allies.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Air Ambulance Services

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) financial and (b) other steps his Department is taking to support the work of Air Ambulance charities.

Karin Smyth:

The Department and the National Health Service continue to support the work of air ambulance charities, including through NHS ambulance trusts' provision of key clinical staff and medical equipment, which supports the operation of air ambulances.

■ Brain: Tumours

Alex Easton:

[\[11782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to address the specific needs of children diagnosed with brain tumours; and whether he plans to take steps to establish a national brain tumour strategy to improve (a) early diagnosis, (b) treatment options and (c) post-treatment support.

Alex Easton:

[\[11783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of recent trends in the amount of time it takes to diagnose brain tumours in (a) children and (b) young adults on long-term health outcomes; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a

brain tumour strategy to help improve (i) the coordination of approaches to funding research, (ii) treatment pathways and (iii) support services for people affected by brain tumours.

Karin Smyth:

The Department recognises that children and young adults with brain cancer are often waiting too long for diagnosis. As part of our 10-Year Health Plan to radically reform our broken National Health Service, we will fight cancer on all fronts, from prevention to diagnosis, treatment, and research.

Brain cancer in children remains one of the hardest to treat cancers and a challenging area of research, but the Government is taking several steps to improve outcomes. In September 2024, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients. This also included a new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support before during and after treatment, quality of life, and patient rehabilitation.

To support faster and earlier diagnosis, we will address the challenges in diagnostic waiting times, providing the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and other tests that are needed to reduce cancer waits. NHS England is delivering a range of interventions to support general practices in diagnosing brain cancer earlier, for example, in April 2020, NHS England introduced the early cancer diagnosis service specification for Primary Care Networks. This is designed to support improvements in rates of early cancer diagnosis by requiring Primary Care Networks to review the quality of their practices' referrals for suspected cancer and take steps to improve this.

We are also improving treatment and support for brain tumour patients. NHS England has worked with the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission to designate centres of excellence in the management of brain tumours, with nine centres having achieved designation. The mission has a workstream on training to expand the brain tumour treatment workforce, in collaboration with NHS bodies, royal colleges, and charities.

■ **Care Quality Commission**

Mark Ferguson:

[\[9803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been (a) budgeted and (b) spent by the Care Quality Commission on the (i) design, (ii) development and (iii) rollout of its new regulatory platform.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Care Quality Commission's (CQC) budget for its new regulatory platform was £88.3 million. The actual cost of the regulatory platform is £92.4 million, including the utilisation of contingency, which isn't accounted for in the budget, and so is the reason for the variance. The actual cost comprises spending on contingent labour,

internal staffing, professional services, and non-pay costs. All spending during the CQC's transformation was subject to appropriate governance, and any procurement was undertaken in line with public sector standards.

The regulatory platform was gradually delivered and implemented over a five-year period to the end of March 2024. The CQC is unable to provide a breakdown of the figures into design, development, and rollout as the regulatory platform was broken down into various services and each of these had a different design, build, test, and deploy phase. These phases overlapped due to the phased rollout.

■ Colonoscopy

Tom Gordon:

[\[11455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to reduce the number of people waiting more than 6 weeks for a colonoscopy in England.

Karin Smyth:

Cutting waiting lists is a key priority for the Government. It is unacceptable that some patients are waiting over six weeks for a diagnostic test, including for a colonoscopy. To cut waiting lists for diagnostic tests, each integrated care board will have a recovery plan for diagnostic services, including endoscopy as needed.

NHS England is continuing to develop gastrointestinal (GI) endoscopy networks across the country, which will address variations in care, including in the timely access to care. The Department is supporting NHS England in completing the rollout and expansion of the community diagnostic programme, including delivering additional endoscopy capacity closer to patients in the community. GI endoscopy training academies have also been established, with one per region, to enable the training and education of the required workforce.

The National Health Service is delivering on a number of specific steps to reduce waiting times for GI endoscopy services, including colonoscopy procedures. This includes the establishment of a national transformation project to enable and support the timely recovery of GI endoscopy services, and investment into an expected net increase of 80 additional dedicated endoscopy rooms to expand capacity, as well as a number of Community Diagnostic Centres offering endoscopy services.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff (a) were dismissed and (b) resigned due to mandatory Covid-19 vaccination regulations.

Karin Smyth:

No National Health Service staff were dismissed due to the regulations requiring COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of deployment. Those regulations were revoked before they came into force. The information requested on resignations is not held by the Department.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Facsimile Transmission

John Glen: [\[11264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many faxes his Department has (a) sent and (b) received since the general election.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not have the corporate capability to send or receive faxes.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Mermaids

Sir John Hayes: [\[11154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Ministers in his Department have met representatives of the Mermaids charity since 5 July 2024.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers from the Department have not met with representatives of the Mermaids charity since 5 July 2024.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Ministers' Private Offices

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[9621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much was spent on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in his Department since the dissolution of the last Parliament; and on what items this was spent.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has not spent any money on new furniture, fittings, or refurbishment of ministerial offices since the dissolution of the last Parliament.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the levels of non-fatal drug overdoses.

Andrew Gwynne:

We know that most overdoses take place in the community. They are largely transitory and hidden events, making it difficult to accurately monitor trends in non-fatal overdoses. The Department monitors hospital admissions data for drug poisonings, which predominantly relate to non-fatal cases.

We will continue to report this proxy data to local authorities to inform monitoring of local progress on reducing deaths and harms from drugs. We are reviewing the best approach for monitoring national trends in harms.

■ Gender Dysphoria: Children

Carla Denyer:

[\[7945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 July 2024 to Question 92 on Gender Dysphoria: Children, what his planned timetable is for (a) the study team to finalise their application for funding and (b) this application to be assessed by an independent scientific review study.

Andrew Gwynne:

A study into the potential benefits and harms of puberty suppressing hormones as one of the treatment options for children and young people with gender incongruence is being developed through a joint programme between NHS England and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the research arm of the Department. The research will be co-sponsored by King's College London and the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. The study team has submitted its research application, and this is currently undergoing scientific review. In August, NHS England stated that the study protocol should be complete by December 2024 and, subject to academic approval, recruitment to the trial would commence in early 2025. Subject to the study achieving the necessary approvals, the NIHR will publish details of the award, including the planned trial duration and study completion date, on its website.

■ Gender Dysphoria: Young People

Tim Roca:

[\[8069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure young people on waiting lists for gender affirming care are transitioned to adult waiting lists when they turn 18.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England published a new service specification in August 2024 for the referral pathway of Children and Young People's Gender Services. The service specification sets out that young people are removed from the waiting list for Children and Young People's Gender Services once they reach the age of 17 years and nine months.

NHS England has determined that it is not clinically appropriate to directly transfer a young person onto the waiting list of an adult service. This is because, as a commissioner of health services rather than a provider, it has no direct knowledge of the aims and intentions of the individual young person in regard to their gender identity and how these may have changed while they were on the national waiting list.

Those who are removed from the national waiting list are advised to seek advice from their general practitioner, who is best placed to support the young person in considering the appropriateness of a referral to an adult Gender Dysphoria Clinic. Should a referral be made to the adult service, the original referral date to the children's service will be honoured for this purpose. As NHS Children and Young People's Gender Services expand, this approach will be regularly reviewed.

In August, NHS England published an implementation plan detailing how it intends to implement recommendations from Dr Cass's report. This includes establishing a follow through service for people aged between 17 and 25 years old. NHS England has started to explore with potential partner organisations the feasibility of establishing this service. The planning assumption is that this follow-through service will become operational no sooner than April 2025. Further development of the design of this part of care will be informed by NHS England's systemic review of adult gender services.

■ **General Practitioners: Mid Cheshire**

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of face-to-face GP appointments in Mid Cheshire constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP). Patients can't get through the front door of the National Health Service, so they aren't getting the timely care they need.

Mid-Cheshire sits within the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board, where 62.8% of appointments were face-to-face in June 2024. Compared to August 2023, where 66.2% of appointments were face-to-face, appointments delivered face-to-face are down by 3.4%.

We have pledged to guarantee a face-to-face appointment for all those who want one. We will make sure the future of GPs is sustainable by training thousands more GPs, ensuring increased capacity across the NHS to deliver this commitment and secure a future pipeline of GPs.

■ **General Practitioners: West Dorset**

Edward Morello:

[\[11214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of GP appointments in West Dorset constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP), we know that this applies to the constituents of West Dorset, and we are committed to fixing the crisis in GPs. West Dorset sits within the NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board, where the number of appointments delivered in August 2024 was 396,000. In August 2023, 409,000 appointments were delivered. This is a decrease of 3.2%.

Our plan will require both investment and reform. Firstly, we will increase the proportion of funding for GPs, starting with a commitment to recruit over 1,000 newly qualified GPs through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement

Scheme. This will increase the number of appointments delivered in GPs, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and take pressure off those currently working in the system.

Additionally, we will deliver a modern booking system to end the 8:00am scramble for GP appointments and will bring back the family doctor by incentivising GPs to see the same patient.

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for NHS treatment in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Karin Smyth:

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government, as we get the National Health Service back on its feet. This means making sure that patients are seen on time and ensuring that people have the best possible experience during their care.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has now announced new investment to support this. Funding has been provided to support the delivery of our commitment to an extra 40,000 NHS operations, scans, and appointments per week. A £1.5 billion capital investment has also been announced towards new surgical hubs and scanners, alongside £70 million for new radiotherapy machines. We will be supporting NHS trusts to deliver more activity through innovation, sharing best practice to increase productivity and efficiency, and ensuring the best value is delivered.

We are transforming diagnostics to cut long waits through the Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs). In Cheshire there are four CDCs currently delivering much needed diagnostic activity, specifically: the Congleton War Memorial CDC; the Shopping City CDC; the Warrington and Halton CDC; and the CDC at Victoria Infirmary Northwich, located within the Mid-cheshire constituency, which has been delivering activity since October 2021.

Dedicated and protected surgical hubs are transforming the way the NHS providers elective care by focusing on high volume low complexity surgeries. Across England, there are currently 110 operational surgical hubs as of September 2024. In Cheshire, a new surgical hub is due to open in April 2025, the Cheshire and Merseyside Surgical Centre, and will provide services to patients across Cheshire and Merseyside.

■ Health: Women

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[10756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to tackle health inequalities affecting women.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 28 October 2024]: Our health mission in England will focus on addressing the social determinants of health, with the goal of halving the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest regions. The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future, and women's equality will be at the heart of our missions.

Women's health hubs provide integrated women's health services in the community, and have a key role tackling health inequalities faced by women. The Department has invested £25 million over 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system. As of September 2024, 36 of the 42 integrated care boards had reported to NHS England that their pilot women's health hub was open.

The Government is also committed to closing the black and Asian maternal mortality gap. As part of NHS England's three year delivery plan, Maternity and Neonatal Systems are rolling out Equity and Equality Action Plans, which set out tailored interventions to tackle inequalities for women and babies from ethnic backgrounds, and those living in the most deprived areas.

■ Healthy Start Scheme**Nadia Whittome:**[\[11914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing auto-enrolment for Healthy Start.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Healthy Start scheme is kept under review. The Healthy Start scheme was introduced in 2006 to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and young children under four years old from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk, and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnant women and children aged under four years old. Healthy Start now supports over 355,000 beneficiaries. This figure is higher than the previous paper voucher scheme.

The NHS Business Services Authority operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. All applicants to the Healthy Start scheme, where they meet the eligibility criteria, must accept the terms and conditions of the prepaid card at the point of application. As the prepaid card is a financial product and cannot be issued without the applicant accepting these terms, the NHS Business Services Authority is not able to automatically provide eligible families with a prepaid card. However, we remain open to all viable routes to improve uptake.

■ Huntington's Disease: Prisoners

Sarah Hall: [\[10655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of prisoners diagnosed with Huntington's disease in the last five years.

Andrew Gwynne:

Neither the Department nor NHS England holds the information requested centrally.

■ Maternity Services: West Yorkshire

Paul Davies: [\[10264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve maternity services in the West Yorkshire region.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to improving maternity and neonatal services across the country, to ensure that all women and babies receive the care they deserve. The West Yorkshire and Harrogate Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS), as part of the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, focuses on transforming maternity services through NHS England's three-year delivery plan, ensuring that care is personalised, and women are listened to. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/our-priorities/maternity>

The West Yorkshire and Harrogate LMNS has multiple working groups, which focus on the four key themes of the three-year delivery plan. This work includes implementing the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle version 3, which is a package of initiatives designed to reduce stillbirths, neonatal brain injury, neonatal death, and preterm birth, and meeting the requirements of the Maternity Incentive Scheme which provides financial incentives for trusts to meet certain safety requirements.

The LMNS has oversight and assurance through various metrics including clinical outcome data, workforce data, patient and staff surveys, a health inequalities dashboard, and a perinatal quality surveillance model.

■ Menopause

Alex Sobel: [\[10465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce health inequalities for women managing menopause in areas of high health inequalities.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future, and women's equality will be at the heart of our missions.

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for providing services that meet the needs of their local population, including menopause services. ICBs are also expected to have a dedicated focus on tackling health inequalities.

A recent rise in prescriptions for Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is a promising sign that more women are getting the advice and help they need. The HRT Prescription Pre Payment-Certificate continues to provide significant savings for patients who are prescribed applicable HRT medications.

The Department has invested £25 million over 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system. One of the aims of women's health hubs is to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. Menopause care is a core service for pilot women's health hubs.

Alex Sobel:

[10466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing mandatory menopause training for GPs.

Karin Smyth:

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has a holistic curriculum of training that all GPs must cover before they are able to pass the examination to become a member of the RCGP and work independently as a GP. There is a specific section on women's health, including the menopause. As a result, the menopause is already a core competency of all qualified GPs.

To support practicing GPs, the RCGP has developed a Women's Health Library drawing together educational resources and guidelines on women's health so primary healthcare professionals have the most up-to-date information. This includes a specific section on menopause, and more information on the Library is available at the following link:

<https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/index.php?categoryid=57>

■ **Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Cancer**

Callum Anderson:

[11421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support cancer care in Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is working closely with NHS England to make sure we have the right workforce with the right skills up and down the country, including in Milton Keynes. This also includes cancer care and treatment.

The Government believes that cancer patients are waiting too long for diagnosis and treatment. We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster. We will improve patients' experience across the system.

■ Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Healthcare Assistants**Callum Anderson:** [\[11431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to address the shortage of healthcare assistants at Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to building a health service fit for the future, with the workforce it needs to get patients seen on time and cared for by the right professional when and where they need it, but bringing in the necessary staff will take time.

Decisions about recruitment are matters for individual NHS Trusts. NHS Trusts manage their recruitment at a local level ensuring they have the right number of staff in place, with the right skill mix, to deliver safe and effective care.

■ Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Strokes**Callum Anderson:** [\[11424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support improvements in stroke care services at Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Karin Smyth:

Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH) is demonstrating an ongoing commitment to delivering stroke services in line with the best practise, set out in the National Stroke Service Model.

MKUH operates a 24-bed Hyper-Acute Stroke Unit, providing a seven-day thrombolysis service from 8:00am to 5:00pm, with additional services outside these hours offered at Luton and Dunstable Hospital. Rated B by the Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme, the MKUH Stroke Unit had an average Door-to-Needle time of 31 minutes over the last year, compared to the national average of 55 minutes. MKUH is the second-best performing trust in England for door-in-and-out transfer time for thrombectomy to Oxford University Hospitals, with a median time of 84 minutes versus the national average of 133 minutes, and ranks 4th nationally for mechanical thrombectomy rates, at 5.9%, compared to 2.6% nationally.

MKUH also uses artificial intelligence powered software called e-Stroke to analyse computed tomography scans, identify brain damage, and automatically alert the clinical team, supporting quicker clinical decisions.

■ Milton Keynes University Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments**Callum Anderson:** [\[11423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of emergency department patients at Milton Keynes University Hospital were seen within four hours in each of the last three years.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows the percentage of accident and emergency attendances to Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, that were admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours, in each of the last three years:

YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY ATTENDANCES ADMITTED, TRANSFERRED, OR DISCHARGED WITHIN FOUR HOURS
2023/24	74.9%
2022/23	79.1%
2021/22	83.9%

Source: Hospital Accident and Emergency Activity statistics, published by NHS Digital, and available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-accident--emergency-activity>

■ **NHS****Robin Swann:****[11523]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2024 to Question 10393 on NHS, whether the Health Minister in each devolved Administration is a working level contact.

Andrew Gwynne:

An interministerial group meeting is currently being diarised for December 2024. At this meeting, all of the Health Ministers from across the United Kingdom will convene to discuss the 10-Year Health Plan in further detail, including any opportunities for alignment and information sharing across the UK.

■ **NHS: Apprentices****Andrew Pakes:****[11506]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS trusts use apprenticeship funding to develop their clinical workforce.

Karin Smyth:

Provisional data, published by the Department for Education and covering all apprenticeships, indicates that there were 18,400 NHS apprenticeship starts from 191 NHS employers for the 2023/24 financial year.

['Public sector apprenticeships - aggregate return values by sub-sector' from 'Apprenticeships', Permanent data table - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

With regards to the number of clinical apprenticeships within NHS Trusts, data is not validated.

■ NHS: Public Consultation

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[11655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure the change.nhs.uk consultation is accessible to (a) people living with disabilities and (b) people without access to the internet.

Karin Smyth:

The Change NHS engagement exercise will give the public, staff, and partners the opportunity to share their views and help develop the 10-Year Health Plan. This will be done through our recently launched online platform, change.NHS.UK, and through online and in-person events.

The online platform provides a variety of formats and ways to respond, to meet the range of accessibility needs. British Sign Language and easy-read formats of the Change NHS surveys are available on the online platform as of 1 November. We are also working to ensure that the online platform is accessible for people using assistive technology. This in line with public sector accessibility requirements that we set out in the contract with the external supplier responsible for the platform.

There is an option to respond via post with a printed copy of the survey content, for those who cannot respond online. Anyone having any difficulty responding can get in touch using the contact details available on the website to request assistance or an alternative way to respond.

■ NHS: Voluntary Work

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help improve how NHS England works with clinically trained volunteers.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England does not directly manage volunteers, with volunteering services being managed and delivered by National Health Service organisations and commissioned partners.

The 2023 NHS Volunteering Taskforce report highlighted the untapped potential of volunteering to tackle some of the NHS's greatest challenges, particularly in improving health outcomes for patients, reducing health inequalities, and increasing the resilience of health and care services at times of extreme pressure. NHS England is committed to delivering on the recommendations outlined in the report, in order to maximise the all-round benefits of involving volunteers.

The NHS continues to appreciate the contribution of clinically trained volunteers, from the thousands of trained Community First Responders across the ambulance service, to volunteers from partner organisations such as St John Ambulance who are commissioned to deliver NHS England's national ambulance auxiliary offer.

NHS England continues to support the growth and development of volunteering across the NHS, which includes volunteer roles that support the delivery of clinical

care, where this is appropriate, whilst ensuring that volunteers are never substituted for our substantive paid workforce.

Building on learning from the pandemic, NHS England is working with national emergency preparedness, resilience, and response teams, NHS organisations, and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners, regarding the role of volunteers and the VCSE sector in enhancing NHS resilience.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Long-Term Workforce plan, what steps his Department plans to take to recognise the clinical capability of volunteers in enhancing NHS resilience and delivering NHS Career pathways.

Karin Smyth:

The Department and NHS England value the excellent contribution that clinically trained volunteers make in supporting the National Health Service, from the thousands of trained Community First Responders across the ambulance service, to volunteers from partner organisations such as St John Ambulance who are commissioned to deliver NHS England's national ambulance auxiliary offer.

NHS England continues to support the growth and development of volunteering across the NHS, which includes volunteer roles that support the delivery of clinical care where this is appropriate, whilst ensuring volunteers are never substituted for our substantive paid workforce.

Building on learning from the pandemic, NHS England is working with national emergency preparedness, resilience, and response teams, NHS organisations, and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners, regarding the role of volunteers and the VCSE sector in enhancing NHS resilience.

NHS England has also been working in partnership with Helpforce, St John Ambulance, and Barnardos on a range of initiatives to better support volunteers to take the next step into a career in the NHS.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to develop volunteering as a route to an NHS career; and what support his Department provides to (a) NHS Cadets and (b) other programmes to help support a (i) diverse and (ii) inclusive NHS workforce.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England has been working in partnership with Helpforce, St John Ambulance, and Barnardos on a range of initiatives to better support volunteers to take the next step into a career in the National Health Service. With Helpforce, this has included supporting 28 pilot organisations to initiate a Volunteer to Career programme, offering routes into careers with a particular focus on clinical workforce pathways. In addition, NHS England's partnership with St John Ambulance has led to over 5,000 14 to 18-year-olds enrolling on the NHS Cadets programme to date. In the last year, 80% of

those new to the programme were from deprived or under-represented groups who might not otherwise have considered a healthcare career. Finally, with Barnardos, NHS England has developed the Young People's Health Challenge to inspire seven to 14-year-olds from deprived communities and underrepresented groups to find out more about the NHS, raise health literacy, create aspirations to work or volunteer with the NHS, and reduce health inequalities.

NHS England is working to embed the Young People's Health Challenge and NHS Cadets programme across the NHS, and ensure sustainability beyond 2024/25. NHS England is also working to share the learning and experiences of the Volunteer to Career programme, developing tools, resources, and guidance that enables all health and care organisations to better support volunteers to move onto careers within the NHS, if they wish to do so.

■ **NHS: Workplace Pensions**

Anna Dixon:

[\[10638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the McCloud remedy is implemented for affected NHS workers by April 2025.

Karin Smyth:

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is implementing the McCloud remedy for impacted members of the NHS Pension Scheme. Remedy implementation is a complex and large-scale undertaking. The core element of the remedy will provide members with a choice of benefits at retirement for the period the discrimination identified by the McCloud judgment was effective. Approximately 350,000 retired members will be offered this choice retrospectively.

The Department expects that the majority of impacted retired members will not receive their choice until after April 2025. Whilst the majority of impacted retired members are likely to already be in receipt of their most beneficial set of benefits, the Department is working with the NHSBSA to accelerate the provision of this choice, particularly for members for whom there would be an immediate financial impact. The NHSBSA will communicate revised timelines with members once these are confirmed.

■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Research**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[10758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support research into pancreatic cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 28 October 2024]: Research is crucial in tackling cancer. The Department spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), with cancer being the largest area of spend at over £121.8 million in 2022/23. The NIHR spends more

on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority. The NIHR has committed over £2.1 million to directly funded pancreatic cancer research over the past five years.

Additionally, NIHR infrastructure funding supports the country's leading experts to develop and deliver high-quality translational, clinical, and applied research that is funded by the NIHR's research programmes, other public funders of research, charities, and the life sciences industry. In doing so, our investment plays a crucial role in underpinning the research funded by our partners.

The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome applications for research into any aspect of human health, including pancreatic cancer. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ Periods: Health Services

Chris Bloore:

[10303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve (a) diagnosis, (b) treatment and (c) ongoing care for (i) endometriosis, (ii) polycystic ovary syndrome and (iii) other menstrual health conditions in (A) Redditch and (B) England; and what steps he is taking to align these efforts with the Women's Health Strategy for England.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health and improving the diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for gynaecological conditions. We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy for England.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines support healthcare professionals to diagnose and treat conditions. The NICE has published [Women's and reproductive health guidelines](#), which are available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/hub/indevelopment/gid-hub10001>

In April 2024, the NICE published updated recommendations on the treatment of endometriosis when fertility is a priority. The NICE is also updating the guidance on the diagnosis of endometriosis, and is planning the development of a guideline on the assessment and management of polycystic ovary syndrome. The NICE has also published a guideline on heavy menstrual bleeding assessment and management. Women's health is also embedded into the Royal College of General Practitioners curriculum for trainee general practitioners (GPs).

Women's health hubs also play a key role in improving care for gynaecological conditions. The Department has invested £25 million over 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system. NHS England has asked the integrated care boards (ICBs) to report

regularly on their progress implementing the funding. The Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB has reported to NHS England that it is using the funding to set up two pilot hubs, one within Herefordshire and one within Worcestershire. To date, the pathway redesign as part of the women's health hubs has been priority for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, with initial focus on menopause. Following implementation of a menopause pilot, focus will be on the remaining core services, specifically menstrual health.

Healthcare services in Herefordshire and Worcestershire offer advice, care, and treatment for menstrual conditions, including endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome. The integrated care system is focused on women's health and hosts a monthly Gynaecology Forum which incorporates clinical and operational discussion on all elements of women's health. The Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust qualifies as a Specialist Endometriosis Centre, with clinics and operations offered in Kidderminster, Redditch, and Worcester. GP referral pathways, specialist endometriosis and pain clinics, and multi-disciplinary meetings provide diagnosis and treatment of all stages of endometriosis. The Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust also employs a dedicated Endometriosis Specialist Nurse and hosts an Endometriosis Support Group for patients.

■ Prescriptions

Sarah Hall:

[\[11451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to standardise data systems for prescriptions between (a) health authority areas, (b) the NHS and (c) GP community services.

Karin Smyth:

Approximately 95% of all primary care prescriptions are standardised using the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS). The EPS allows prescribers to send prescriptions electronically to a dispenser, such as a pharmacy, nominated by the patient. This makes the prescribing and dispensing process more efficient and convenient for patients and healthcare workers. The EPS is a national service and transcends health authority or integrated care board boundaries, because a prescriber using the EPS can prescribe a prescription that can be dispensed in any pharmacy in England. The EPS can also be used by prescribers in urgent and emergency care, using the NHS 111 or 111 Online services.

The Digital Medicines programme is introducing this capability for secondary care, specifically acute and community hospital trusts and mental health trusts, so National Health Service trusts can implement and use EPS, where clinically and legally appropriate, meaning patients treated in secondary care settings will also be able to receive their medicines from any dispensary in England.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Applications**

Nick Timothy: [\[11180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum applications were (a) made and (b) concluded in each month of each year since 2010.

Nick Timothy: [\[11181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum applications were completed on average per caseworker per week in each month of each year since 2010.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes quarterly data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum applications and initial decisions are available in tables Asy_D01 and Asy_D02 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. The latest data relates to the year ending June 2024. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook.

Monthly data on the number of initial decisions and asylum caseworkers is published in table Asy_05(M) of the '[Immigration and Protection Data](#)' as part of the '[Migration Transparency Data release](#)'. The data covers the period from January 2020 to June 2024. Please note that the number of initial decisions will not match the number of decisions in table Asy_D02 as the figures in Asy_05(M) have been derived from management information and are therefore provisional and subject to change. The number of asylum caseworking staff by financial year is available in table Asy_04 with data available from 2011/12 to 2023/24.

Nick Timothy: [\[11213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) guidance and (b) training her Department provides to caseworkers handling asylum applications.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Asylum decision-makers receive extensive training on interviewing and considering asylum claims.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/asylum-decision-making-guidance-asylum-instructions>

Asylum decision-makers carefully consider the claimant's protection needs by assessing all the evidence provided by the claimant in light of published asylum and country information guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes>

■ Crime: Undocumented Migrants**Rupert Lowe:**[\[11117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many crimes were committed by undocumented migrants by each crime committed in each year since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The information requested is not available from published statistics.

Any foreign national who is convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity.

Under the UK Borders Act 2007, a deportation order must be made where a foreign national has been convicted of an offence and received a custodial sentence of 12 months or more. A foreign national who has been convicted of an offence that has caused serious harm, who is a persistent offender or who represents a threat to national security may also be considered for deportation under the Immigration Act 1971, where it is conducive to the public good.

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities. Foreign nationals who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will pursue their deportation, and they will be swiftly removed from the country.

■ Domestic Abuse: Death**Max Wilkinson:**[\[11448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the ability of local authorities to resource Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews.

Jess Phillips:

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) offer a vital opportunity for national and local agencies, local communities and society as a whole to learn lessons from domestic abuse related deaths and treat every death as preventable.

The funding for DHRs is provided through the local government funding settlement and the Home Office is unable to provide specific guidance on how funding should be allocated locally.

However, whilst the Government is committed to the fundamental principle of the DHR process, we recognise that there is room for improvement in the way these reviews are currently conducted and the lessons applied.

The department recently ran a public consultation seeking views on a revised version of the statutory guidance which underpins DHRs and we will be carefully considering the findings to ensure that improvements are made.

■ Draft Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill

Neil Coyle:

[\[11584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department made an assessment of the potential merits of including outdoor events in the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.

Dan Jarvis:

The Bill has provided for events to be in scope where it is considered that there is an appropriate level of control and that mitigating measures for protective security and preparedness can reasonably be put in place.

For an event to be in scope of the bill, it must:

- take place in a building, on other land or at a combination of the two (unless the location already falls within the enhanced tier);
- be accessible to members of the public;
- have individuals in place at the event to take payment from members of the public or to check their tickets or passes; and
- be reasonably expected to be attended by 800 or more individuals at some point during the event.

Outdoor events that satisfy the above criteria will fall within scope of the Bill. Well established processes already exist to help those responsible for large open events to consider threats and develop appropriate protection and preparedness arrangements. This includes processes, led by the police, to consider security for large open events and, where appropriate, the deployment of appropriate measures and procedures working with event organisers.

Neil Coyle:

[\[11585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department made an assessment of the potential merits of including unticketed events in the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.

Dan Jarvis:

An event must satisfy several criteria to be in scope of the Bill. One of these criteria is that the event must have employees, or other individuals involved in the event, checking that attendees have paid to attend the event, have an invitation granting access, or have a pass that grants access (which might include a free ticket).

Whilst this provision applies to paid-for events, this provision will also encompass free events, if there is a check that attendees satisfy a condition of entry as specified above.

We consider the 'express permission' requirement provides an appropriate basis to capture events where there is the resource and control to consider and take forward security requirements.

■ Driving Offences

Rupert Lowe:

[11396]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many drivers were caught driving without (a) a valid MOT, (b) car tax, (c) car insurance and (d) a driving licence by nationality in each of the last five years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not hold all of the information requested.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on fixed penalty notices and other outcomes for motoring offences as part of its annual 'Police powers and procedures: Other PACE powers, England and Wales' statistical release. The latest data is available here: [Other PACE powers, year ending March 2023 \(second edition\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/other-pace-powers-year-ending-march-2023-second-edition) and covers the calendar year ending December 2022.

Data on the number of fixed penalty notices issued and other outcomes for "Driving licence-related offences", "Vehicle insurance offences" and "Operator's licence offences" is provided in table FPN_03 of the motoring offences data tables, available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b7ae3cc5aacc0013a68463/fixed-penalty-notices-and-other-motoring-offences-statistics-police-powers-and-procedures-year-ending-31-dec-2022.ods>.

Information on "Miscellaneous motoring offences (excluding seat belt offences)" is also provided in table FPN_03 although it is not possible to break these offences down further.

The Home Office does not hold information on the specific offences of driving without a valid MOT or car tax.

Data on the nationality of driver's licenses is not centrally held by the Home Office.

■ Drugs: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[11164]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle county lines operations in Lincolnshire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

County lines is the most violent and exploitative model of drug distribution nationally, and a harmful form of Child Criminal Exploitation. The Government's manifesto included a commitment to introduce a new offence of criminal exploitation of children, to go after the gangs who are luring young people into violence and crime.

While the the majority of lines originate from the areas covered by the Metropolitan Police Service, West Midlands Police, Merseyside Police, and Greater Manchester Police, county lines is a national issue which is why, through the Home Office-funded County Lines Programme, we fund the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre to

monitor the intelligence picture and co-ordinate the national law enforcement response.

The County Lines Programme taskforces regularly conduct joint operations with other forces, and we have established a dedicated fund which provides local forces with additional funding to tackle county lines, including Lincolnshire Police.

Since the County Lines Programme was launched in 2019, police activity has resulted in over 5,100 line closures, over 15,600 arrests and over 8,000 safeguarding referrals.

■ Home Office: Training

Nick Timothy: [\[11212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether external (a) guidance and (b) training has been contracted for discussing (i) unconscious bias, (ii) critical race theory and (iii) decolonisation with staff in her Department.

Nick Timothy: [\[11348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) guidance has been issued and (b) training courses have been delivered to staff in her Department on (i) unconscious bias, (ii) critical race theory and (iii) decolonisation since January 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

In 2021-2022, in response to Recommendation 6 of the Windrush Report, the previous government commissioned the introduction of a new training course for Home Office staff on the 'History of the UK and its relationship with the rest of the world', created from a wide field of academic and non-academic sources, including academic experts, psychologists, behavioural scientists, sociologists, and historians from outside the Home Office.

The training material for this course includes content related to the history and legacy of decolonisation, but does not include any material focused on critical race theory, or unconscious bias. The Home Office has no plans to commission the preparation of any additional training materials in this area.

■ Immigration: Deportation

Nadia Whittome: [\[11912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her article in the Sun newspaper entitled We can't pretend everything is OK: knife crime, anti social behaviour and people smugglers are plaguing our streets, published on 20 July 2024, whether the Returns and Enforcement programme has a specific name.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We have established a new Returns Transformation Portfolio, focusing on delivering a major surge in immigration enforcement and returns activity to safe countries, through swift decision making to remove people with no right to be in the UK. This is to ensure that asylum and immigration rules are respected and enforced.

■ Immigration: Families

Neil Coyle:

[\[11879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will ensure that official correspondence from her Department to people seeking to establish biological family relationships in immigration applications makes clear that providing DNA evidence is the best way of establishing parenthood.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office has no statutory power to require DNA evidence as part of an immigration application, but applicants are free to volunteer DNA evidence. Where applicants choose not to provide DNA evidence, no negative inference can be drawn from that and used in the decision-making process.

Where there is insufficient evidence of a biological relationship, applicants are given the opportunity to provide further supporting evidence. This can include DNA evidence, a declaration of parentage by the Family or High Court, or any other relevant evidence of the existence of the claimed biological relationship.

As the provision of DNA evidence is voluntary, officials must not send out letters only inviting applicants to offer DNA evidence and are unable to advise applicants on the relative merits of the evidence they may choose to provide.

The publicly available guidance is shown on gov.uk: DNA Policy Guidance.

■ Knives: Amnesties

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of knives that were surrendered during the knife amnesty between 26 August 2024 and 23 September 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

We will be shortly publishing the outcome of the surrender and compensation scheme for zombie style knives and machetes. This will include the numbers surrendered under the scheme.

■ Knives: Crime

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce knife crime in Slough.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Halving knife crime over the next decade is a key part of the Government's Safer Streets mission, and we are taking immediate action to tackle the scourge of serious violence on our streets. We have implemented the ban on zombie-style knives and machetes, outlawing the manufacture, supply, sale and possession of those lethal

blades, and we will go further – with a consultation on the ban of ninja swords being launched shortly.

We will also create a new Young Futures programme – with new Prevention Partnerships and youth hubs so we can intervene earlier to prevent at-risk young people from being drawn into violent crime.

The Government's manifesto included a commitment to introduce a new offence of criminal exploitation of children, to go after the gangs who are luring young people into violence and crime, and we will set out more detail on this in due course.

■ Opioids: Misuse

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help prevent the (a) distribution and (b) use of synthetic opioids.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent the sale of (a) illegal and (b) prescription drugs on dark web marketplaces.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government takes seriously the threat from potent synthetic drugs, including synthetic opioids such as nitazenes, and is taking action to disrupt this deadly trade. Reducing drug harms has important benefits for public health and for the Government's mission to deliver safer streets.

The HMG Synthetic Opioids Taskforce is working with partner agencies such as the National Crime Agency (NCA), the Department for Health and Social Care and the National Police Chiefs Council to deliver an evidence-based response to the level of risk posed by synthetic opioids and implement a range of policies and mitigations to counter the distribution and use of these dangerous substances.

To stem the supply of illicit synthetic opioids to and within the UK, the NCA, Police and Border Force are working together to ensure all lines of enquiry are prioritised and vigorously pursued. This involves mapping and targeting key offenders, including those operating within dark web markets.

Additionally, to support people with drug dependency who may be at risk of synthetic opioid harm, £267 million has been invested in drug and alcohol treatment this year, improving the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment services in England.

The unlawful sale of controlled drugs online is listed as a priority offence in the Online Safety Act, meaning that under this legislation, technology companies must proactively remove this type of content from their platforms and use proportionate systems designed to minimise the risk of users from encountering such content.

■ Police: Cambridgeshire**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[12004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to paragraph 4.20 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, by how much the core government grant for police forces will be increased for Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Budget confirmed that the core government grant for police forces will increase. Further details and force level allocations will be set out at the provisional settlement in December.

■ Runnymede Trust: Finance**Sir John Hayes:** [\[11159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has provided funding to the Runnymede Trust in the last ten years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office has provided no funding to the Runnymede Trust in the last ten years.

■ Security Industry Authority: Finance**Neil Coyle:** [\[11854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to provide additional funding to the Security Industry Authority following the passage of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.

Dan Jarvis:

The regulator function of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill will be delivered as a new function of the Security Industry Authority and will be funded by the Home Office.

The Security Industry Authority has an existing licence fee-funded arrangement that will not be used to deliver its functions under this Bill.

Work is ongoing to design the new regulatory regime and to finalise costs.

■ Transport: Crime**Rupert Lowe:** [\[11200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a breakdown of crimes committed on the transport network by (a) nationality and (b) category of crime in each of the last five years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

It is currently not possible to separately identify all crimes committed on the transport network but the Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of crimes recorded by the British Transport Police that occurred in England and Wales.

The BTP is responsible for policing the railway network, London Underground, the Docklands Light Railway, Croydon Tramlink and the Midland Metro.

Data on the number of crimes recorded by BTP for each of the last five years broken down by offence type, is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

Information on the nationality of offenders is not routinely collected.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Age**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of irregular migrants who claim to be under 18 have undergone age assessments since 2018; and how many and what proportion of those assessed were found to be 18 or over.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on age disputes raised and resolved is published in table Asy_D05 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'.

The latest data relates to year ending June 2024. Note that the age disputes in Asy_D05 relate to people who have claimed asylum and will include people who did not arrive in the UK irregularly.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate his Department has made of the number of irregular migrants that entered the UK via the English Channel whose whereabouts are no longer known.

Dame Angela Eagle:

On a daily basis, the Home Office publishes data on the number of small boats crossing the Channel that have been involved in uncontrolled landings. The latest such publication, and a time series dating back to 2018, can be found at: Small boat activity in the English Channel - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Hotels**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will publish a list of the hotels housing irregular migrants, broken down by star rating; and if he will provide the number of irregular migrants in each hotel.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, by local authority and accommodation type, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most

recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\) \(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables).

For the safety and security of the asylum seekers accommodated and staff, the Home Office does not publish the location of accommodation sites.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Norfolk

Rupert Lowe:

[11209]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many irregular migrants have landed in (a) Norfolk and (b) Great Yarmouth constituency since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

On a daily basis, the Home Office publishes data on the number of small boats crossing the Channel that have been involved in uncontrolled landings. The latest such publication, and a time series dating back to 2018, can be found at the following link:

[Statistics relating to Illegal Migration - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-illegal-migration)

We do not hold data in an easily accessible format for the number of these boats to arrive in Norfolk or in the Great Yarmouth Constituency.

■ Violent and Sex Offender Register

Rupert Lowe:

[12202]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a breakdown of the sex offenders register by nationality.

Jess Phillips:

Qualifying sex offenders are required to notify their personal details to the police. This system is often referred to as the 'sex offenders' register' and requires offenders to provide their local police station with a record of (amongst other things) their: name, address, date of birth and national insurance number. This is done annually and whenever their details change.

The notification requirements are an automatic consequence of a conviction or caution for an offence in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

All sex offenders subject to the notification requirements are managed under the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA), a statutory arrangement requiring the police, probation and prison services in each local criminal justice area to assess and manage the risks posed by individuals convicted of certain offences.

The Ministry of Justice publishes annual MAPPA statistics. The most recent statistics (published 31 October 2024) showed there were 70,052 sex offenders (known as category 1 offenders) managed under MAPPA on 31 March 2024. The MAPPA annual statistics does not include a breakdown of category 1 offenders by nationality. That data is not centrally collected.

■ Visas: Dependants

Melanie Ward: [\[11676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for an Adult Dependent Relative visa there were in each of the last five years.

Melanie Ward: [\[11677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the acceptance rate for Adult Dependent Relative visa applications was in each of the last five years.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office publishes data on Family visas in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on visa applications are published in table 'Vis_D01' whilst data on the outcomes of visa applications are published in table 'Vis_D02' of the [detailed entry clearance visas dataset](#). Further information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates up to the end of June 2024.

Notes

1. Adult dependant relative visas are a subset of the 'Family: Other (for immediate settlement)' visa type subgroup.
1. An application submitted may receive an outcome in a different quarter.
2. To calculate the grant rate, we recommend taking the number of grants and divide by the total outcomes (grants, refusals, withdrawals, and lapsed) in a specified period.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

Melanie Ward: [\[11678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average decision-making time for an Adult Dependent Relative visa application was in each of the last five years.

Seema Malhotra:

Current processing times for Adult Dependent Relative applications applying for entry clearance to the UK are 12 weeks. Processing times for Adult Dependent Relative applications applying from within the UK are 8 weeks.

Further information on family visa processing times for applications made outside of the UK can be found here: Visa processing times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Information on family visa processing times for applications made from within the UK can be found here: Visa processing times: applications inside the UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

NB: these links list Adult Dependant Relative applications as 'Adult coming to be cared for by relative'.

■ **Visas: Migrant Workers**

Melanie Ward: [\[11192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average processing time is for a Skilled Worker visa.

Seema Malhotra:

Data on performance against service standards is published through migration transparency data and can be found at: [Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-transparency-data).

The Home Office also publishes information on visa processing times for applications inside and outside the UK at: [Visa processing times - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-processing-times).

The Home Office makes every attempt to meet the service level agreement standard, but in certain cases additional checks are required which can mean visa requests take longer to process.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Buildings and Housing: Solar Power**

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[11493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2024 to Question 9543 on Housing: Construction, what steps her Department is taking to encourage the fitting of solar panels on new homes and buildings.

Alex Norris:

The Government's approach to building regulations remains technology-neutral, to ensure housebuilders have the flexibility to choose the most appropriate and cost-effective solutions for their site. However, we appreciate the benefits of solar panels, including lower bills for households and greater security from fluctuations in electricity prices. That is why the Deputy Prime Minister and I are clear that rooftop solar should play an important role, where appropriate, as part of future standards for homes and buildings.

■ **Business Premises: Empty Property**

Dr Simon Opher: [\[11626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to implement part 10 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Alex Norris:

The Government is fully committed to rejuvenating our high streets and tackling the issue of persistent vacancy. To achieve this, we will implement new High Street Rental Auctions as set out in Part 10 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This will empower local authorities to require landlords to rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants. Secondary legislation will be introduced shortly to enable local authorities to exercise this power.

Church Urban Fund**Adam Jogee:**[\[11199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had discussions with representatives from the Church Urban Fund since 5 July 2024.

Alex Norris:

My officials are in regular contact with the Church Urban Fund and I am pleased to say that my department has recently agreed to fund the Church Urban Fund up to £515,000 in this financial year to deliver the Near Neighbours programme. This funding is subject to clearance through the department's internal finance and due diligence processes.

Local Government: Insolvency**Lee Anderson:**[\[11178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to intervene where councils have issued a section 114 notice.

Jim McMahon:

This Government recognises that council funding has been under pressure since 2010, and we understand that improving how local government is funded is crucial to enabling councils to deliver for local residents. We will provide councils with more stability and certainty through moving towards multi-year funding settlements and by ending wasteful competitive bidding pots. This will ensure councils can plan their finances for the future properly, delivering better value for money for taxpayers.

Councils are responsible for their own finances, and for setting a balanced budget in line with their statutory duties. However, any council that has unmanageable pressures should approach the Government in the first instance.

We have recently confirmed that we will have a framework in place to support those in the most difficult positions. This will be a collaborative process, and for example we recently confirmed our intention not to replicate the punitive premium on borrowing for councils needing support which existed under the previous government's framework.

■ Sleeping Rough**Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[11539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to tackle rough sleeping in (a) Stoke-on-Trent South constituency and (b) the rest of England.

Rushanara Ali:

Rough Sleeping levels are far too high. This can have a devastating impact on those affected. We will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us back on track to ending homelessness, and have announced at the Spending Review that funding for homelessness and rough sleeping is increasing by £233 million next year compared to 2024/25.

From April 2022 to March 2025 Stoke-on-Trent City Council has been allocated over £3.5 million as part of £547 million Rough Sleeping Initiative funding to tackle rough sleeping across England.

JUSTICE**■ Victims and Prisoners Act 2024****Ms Stella Creasy:**[\[11600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2024 to Question 612 on Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, when section 31 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 will come into force.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Appropriate protections for victims of harassment or stalking are vital. We are carefully considering implementation of section 31 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 to ensure data and safeguarding protections are built into the process. As part of this consideration, we have included a provision in the Data (Use and Access) Bill to ensure that section 31 extends UK-wide, given the nature of the UK's data protection framework.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE**■ Home Office: Correspondence****Carla Denyer:**[\[11665\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, with reference to the oral contribution of Leader of the House of Commons on 10 October 2024, Official Report, column 475, for what reason a response from a Minister was not provided before 21 October; and whether a response will be provided before any future decision is made relating to the government's independent adviser on political violence and disruption.

Lucy Powell:

Following the Business Question on the 10th October 2024, I wrote to the Cabinet Office and my office further contacted the Home Office to raise this matter. Where Members raise issues with Ministers, it is important that they receive full and timely responses. I understand that the Home Office has now responded to the Hon. Member.

NORTHERN IRELAND■ **Health Services: Pay****Claire Hanna:**[\[11399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Health Minister on ensuring pay parity for health workers in Northern Ireland with Great Britain.

Hilary Benn:

Public sector pay is a devolved matter. It is for the Northern Ireland Executive to take decisions on pay awards.

■ **Northern Ireland Office****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[11757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which organisation provides for official cars for Government transport in Northern Ireland.

Charlie Dewhirst:[\[11758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7013 on Northern Ireland Office: Official Cars, which organisation provides official cars for his Department's transport in Great Britain.

Hilary Benn:

For security reasons, the Northern Ireland Office is unable to disclose specific details on car travel for Ministers and officials in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY■ **Broadband: Rural Areas****Samantha Niblett:**[\[11463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help improve digital connectivity in rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to the rollout of fast, reliable broadband to all parts of the UK. Through Project Gigabit, there are 36 contracts in place, set to connect over

1 million homes and businesses that would otherwise miss out, with more contracts to be awarded in the coming months.

We are also working with the UK's four mobile network operators to deliver the Shared Rural Network, improving 4G mobile broadband connectivity for people living, working and visiting the UK's rural areas.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[11880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Table 4.14 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, whether the £14.7bn capital DEL funding settlement for the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology for 2025-26 includes the £2.7bn for association to EU research programmes.

Feryal Clark:

DSIT has been allocated an R&D budget of £13.9 billion in 2025/26 within its capital DEL settlement. This includes funding for the full costs of association to EU research programmes, including Horizon Europe, and additional funding for the Horizon Guarantee.

■ Internet: Safety

Neil Coyle: [\[11856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of powers to remove (a) false, (b) inciting and (c) otherwise harmful content from online platforms.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act gives online platforms new duties to put in place systems and processes to remove illegal content on their services. This includes illegal false communications and content which incites hatred. Platforms will also need to put in place systems and processes to protect children from accessing harmful and age-inappropriate content.

Ofcom is the regulator for this new regime, and it will have extensive enforcement powers to take action where companies do not comply with their new duties. The swift and effective implementation of the Act is a government priority, and we continue to keep online safety measures under review.

■ Rural Areas: Broadband

Samantha Niblett: [\[11467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing funding for digital connectivity in rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

As outlined in the Autumn Budget, we are continuing to drive progress in improving broadband and mobile coverage across the country, including in rural areas, confirming over £500 million of funding for next year (in 2025-26).

We are committed to Project Gigabit and its goal of achieving nationwide gigabit coverage by 2030. Through the Shared Rural Network, we will also improve 4G coverage to at least 95% of the UK by the end of 2025.

The government is continuing to consider alternative ways to improve connectivity for those not due to be covered by existing government programmes or commercial activity.

Technology: New Businesses**Samantha Niblett:**[\[11464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help support female-led tech start-ups.

Feryal Clark:

This Government is committed to strengthening diversity in the tech sector, including supporting female-led start-ups, and has made breaking down barriers to opportunity one of our five national missions.

Programmes like DSIT's £12m Digital Growth Grant and Innovate UK's Women in Innovation Awards are supporting female-led businesses through grants and wider business support.

In September, the Chancellor announced Government support for the Invest in Women Taskforce. The Taskforce aims to establish a funding pool of more than £250 million for female-founded businesses through private capital, making it one of the world's largest investment funding pools aimed solely at female founders.

SCOTLAND**Migrants: Employment****Stephen Gethins:**[\[11942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on incentivising migrants to work in key industries in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

We are taking a joined up-approach across government, linking migration policy and visa controls to skills and labour market policies – so immigration is not used as an alternative to training or tackling workforce problems here at home. We value the important contribution made by workers from overseas, but we need to consider issues in the round, and work with industries to ensure they can attract the workforces they need for the future. To achieve this we are strengthening the

Migration Advisory Committee, and establishing a framework for joint working with skills bodies across the UK, the Industrial Strategy Council and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Stephen Gethins:

[\[11943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has had discussions with the Scottish Government on incentivising migrants to work in key industries in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

I have had frequent discussions with the Deputy First Minister of Scotland and have been clear that immigration should not be used as an alternative to training or tackling workforce problems here at home. We value the important contribution made by workers from overseas, but we need to consider issues in the round, and work with industries to ensure they can attract the workforces they need for the future. To achieve this we are strengthening the Migration Advisory Committee, and establishing a framework for joint working with skills bodies across the UK, the Industrial Strategy Council and the Department for Work and Pensions.

TRANSPORT

■ A12: Repairs and Maintenance

Priti Patel:

[\[11846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will provide funding for the A12 widening scheme.

Lilian Greenwood:

On 30 July 2024, the Secretary of State announced that she was commissioning a review of the Department's capital spend portfolio.

This review is ongoing and will support the development of our long-term strategy for transport, developing a modern and integrated network with people at its heart, ensuring that transport infrastructure can be delivered efficiently and on time.

The A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme is being considered as part of the capital review alongside other future road projects.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Training

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[11241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve access to artificial intelligence training.

Mike Kane:

This Government is committed to delivering an efficient and effective future transport sector. To do that we need to ensure that the sector and the public servants which support it are equipped to use, regulate, guide and assure AI systems effectively.

My department is working with experts in this sector to develop internal training which will be broadly available to staff members, senior leaders and even ministers to help the whole department, its arms-length bodies and agencies improve their understanding of what AI can offer and how to go about supporting its development.

■ **Bicycles: Lighting**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is the Minister taking to reduce the impact from cyclists using (a) strobe and (b) flashing lights on (i) motorists and (ii) other road users.

Lilian Greenwood:

Standards for the fitment and use of bicycle lights are set out in the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 as amended.

Front and rear flashing lights are only permitted on bicycles provided they do not cause undue dazzle or discomfort to other road users, have a constant flashing frequency of 1 to 4 hertz and, if they are the only lights fitted, an intensity of not less than four candelas.

Enforcement of road traffic law is generally an operational matter for individual police forces and their officers can issue verbal warnings or fixed penalty notices, or report riders for formal prosecution.

■ **Bus Services: Boston and Skegness**

Richard Tice:

[\[11401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to support local bus services in Boston and Skegness.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving local bus services is a key part of this government's growth mission, and the government has set out plans to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions.

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, including in Boston and Skegness, to ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them. The Bill will seek to increase the powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership.

In addition, the government has confirmed an additional £925 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London, bringing total bus investment at the Budget to over £1 billion. Local authorities can use the £925 million to introduce new bus routes, make services more frequent and protect crucial bus routes for local communities.

The government will continue working closely with local transport authorities including Lincolnshire County Council, and others, to deliver better bus and public transport services throughout England.

■ Bus Services: Fares

Andrew Rosindell: [\[11244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of raising of the bus fare cap in England on working families.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows how important it is to provide affordable bus travel, particularly in rural communities and towns where there is heavy reliance on buses. Under the inherited plans of the previous administration, funding for the current cap on bus fares had been due to expire at the end of 2024 – with no plan in place to ensure passengers had access to affordable, reliable bus services.

That is why the Prime Minister confirmed on 28 October that the government will invest £151 million to introduce a £3 cap on single bus fares from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. This cap on fares will ensure millions of people can continue to access affordable bus tickets, including potential savings of up to 80% on some routes, while ensuring good value for the taxpayer.

Mr Paul Kohler: [\[12000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report entitled £2 bus fare cap evaluation: interim report, published on 17 May 2023, whether her Department prepared a final report before 24 May 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department has published two interim reports setting out emerging trends in key outcomes from the first two months of the national bus fare cap scheme. These reports are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2-bus-fare-cap>.

On Monday 28 October, the Prime Minister confirmed the government will introduce a new £3 cap on single bus fares from 1 January 2025 until the end of 2025. The £2 cap on single bus fares had been due to come to an end on 31 December 2024. This will be replaced by the £3 cap to help millions access opportunities, and promote bus use by passengers.

■ Bus Services: Great Yarmouth

Rupert Lowe: [\[11412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to support local bus services in Great Yarmouth Constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving local bus services is a key part of this government's growth mission, and the government has set out plans to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions.

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, including in Great Yarmouth, to ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them. The Bill will seek to increase the powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership.

In addition, the government has confirmed an additional £925 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London, bringing total bus investment at the Budget to over £1 billion. Local authorities can use the £925 million to introduce new bus routes, make services more frequent and protect crucial bus routes for local communities.

The government will continue working closely with local transport authorities including Norfolk County Council, and others, to deliver better bus and public transport services throughout England.

■ Cambrian Line: Repairs and Maintenance**Grahame Morris:**[\[11182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding her Department has provided for signalling improvements on the Cambrian line since 2014.

Lilian Greenwood:

Since 2014 my Department has allocated £3.8 million of UK Government funding for signalling improvements on the Cambrian Line.

■ Cycling and Walking**Clive Jones:**[\[11984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport in response to the question from the hon. Member for Wokingham of 10 October 2024, Official Report, column 441, when further information in writing will be provided.

Simon Lightwood:

Given the complex issues, my officials have worked closely with Network Rail to ensure a clear and helpful response, which I understand has been sent to the Hon. member today.

■ Motor Vehicles: Lighting and Sirens**Rupert Lowe:** [\[11433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to allow independent lifeboat services to use (a) blue lights and (b) sirens on public highways.

Lilian Greenwood:

Ministers are giving consideration to this matter. An update will be provided in due course.

■ Network Rail: Alexander Mann Solutions**Grahame Morris:** [\[11183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the value for money of Network Rail's annual spending with Alexander Mann Solutions.

Simon Lightwood:

Network Rail contracts with Alexander Mann Solutions through the Crown Commercial Services Framework, which is subject to value for money due diligence.

■ Rail Partners: Finance**Grahame Morris:** [\[11166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding her Department provided to Rail Partners in (a) 2021, (b) 2022 and (c) 2023.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department has not provided any funding directly to Rail Partners in 2021, 2022 or 2023.

■ Railways: Finance**Clive Jones:** [\[11147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7092 on Heathrow Airport: Railways, when her Department intends to publish a plan for future rail investment.

Simon Lightwood:

We have announced our intention to conduct a thorough review of the previous government's transport plans to ensure that our transport infrastructure portfolio drives economic growth and delivers value for money for taxpayers. Decisions about individual projects will be informed by the review process and confirmed in due course.

■ Railways: Freight

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[10804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps Shadow Great British Railways is taking to increase the volume of goods moved by rail.

Simon Lightwood:

The Secretary of State has tasked Shadow Great British Railways leaders with producing a delivery plan for both passengers and freight users. Priorities will be communicated in due course.

In the future, Great British Railways will have a statutory duty to promote the use of rail freight and an overall growth target, as confirmed by the Secretary of State when she announced the establishment of Shadow Great British Railways.

■ Roads: Accidents

Joe Morris:

[\[11666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many road accidents there were in (a) England, (b) the North East, (c) Northumberland by ward and (d) Hexham constituency in the latest period for which data is available.

Joe Morris:

[\[11667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish the most recent data her Department holds on the number of road accidents classified as accidental deaths in (a) England, (b) the North East, (c) Northumberland by ward and (d) Hexham constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

Data on road injury collisions are reported by police using the STATS19 system. The number of personal injury road collisions in each of the areas requested in 2023 are shown in the table below.

AREA	ALL COLLISIONS
England	96,771
North East England	3,078
Northumberland	430
Hexham constituency	109

The number of collisions by ward is not routinely available. Mapping tools to view the distribution of individual collisions across Northumberland are available alongside the latest published statistical release on GOV.UK.

Data on which fatal collisions were classified as accidental does not fall under the remit of the Department for Transport and is recorded by coroners.

■ Roads: Capital Investment**Laurence Turner:** [\[11714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date her Department provided proposals to Highways England for the Road Investment Strategy 2.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport published the Draft second Road Investment Strategy on 29 October 2018, setting out the Governments objectives and funding available for RIS2, to allow National Highways (then Highways England) to prepare its Draft Strategic Business Plan. The final Road Investment Strategy 2 was published on 11 March 2020, on which the company based its detailed Delivery Plan.

Laurence Turner: [\[11728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 35 of the minutes of the Office of Rail and Roads Board meeting of 25 June 2024, when National Highways plans to publish the Delivery Plan Update for 2024/25.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways intend to publish the Delivery Plan Update for 2024/25 later this year.

■ Roads: Essex**Priti Patel:** [\[11848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding she has allocated to Essex County Council for highways in each of the next five years.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. Within the Budget on 30 October, the Chancellor announced that for the 2025/26 financial year there would be a £500 million increase for local highways maintenance funding in England, an increase of nearly 50% compared to the current financial year. Funding allocations for specific local highway authorities for 2025/26, including Essex County Council, will be confirmed in due course.

Funding allocations for individual local highway authorities beyond 2025/26 will be a matter for the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Trade Fairs: Berlin**Grahame Morris:** [\[11165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which consular representatives from his Department attended the Innotrans rail trade convention in Berlin between Tuesday 24 and Friday 27 September 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

The official delegation from my department which attended InnoTrans in Berlin between 24 and 26 September was led by the Director for Rail International, Integration and Security.

■ Transport: Yorkshire and the Humber**Mark Swards:**[\[11689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help support improvements to (a) local transport links and (b) networks across (i) Yorkshire and (ii) Northern Lincolnshire.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department is committed to improving local transport across the Yorkshire and Humber. The Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement on 30 October a range of funding to support local transport, including funding that will provide for development of West Yorkshire Mass Transit and renewal of the Supertram in Sheffield. This includes an uplift to national City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding in 2025-26 by £200m, helping to improve the local transport in our largest city regions and drive growth and productivity across the country. This is in addition to the £570m and £830m already allocated to South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire for CRSTS1.

Additionally, the Chancellor announced over £650m of funding for local transport beyond City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements to ensure that transport connections improve in our towns, villages and rural areas as well as in our major cities. This includes funding to progress transport-related Levelling Up Fund projects through to 2025/26 including schemes such as Connecting West Leeds which will provide multi-modal enhancements to capacity, efficiency, safety and accessibility for all users of the A6120 Leeds Outer Ring Road.

Furthermore, the government has committed to delivering better bus services, and in the Budget confirmed investment of over £1 billion in 2025/26 to support and improve bus services and keep fares affordable.

This investment sits alongside the measures we are already undertaking to reform the bus system, including through the introduction of the Buses Bill later in this Parliamentary session, as we seek to ensure local leaders have the powers they need to deliver the better, more reliable services that passengers deserve.

TREASURY**■ Agriculture: Finance**

Andrew Bowie: [11168]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a ring-fenced, multi-annual improved funding settlement for the agricultural sector.

Darren Jones:

The first phase of the Spending Review 2025, which concluded alongside Autumn Budget 2024, has set budgets for 24-25 and 25-26.

As agricultural policy is devolved, it is for the Devolved Governments to allocate their funding as they choose. This is a key principle of devolution, and we are respecting that by not ringfencing funding for agriculture.

The second phase of Spending Review 2025 which will conclude next year, will set multi-year budgets.

■ Cash Dispensing: Rural Areas

Andrew Bowie: [11328]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to improve access to cash in rural areas.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government recognises that cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK, including those in vulnerable groups, and is committed to protecting access to cash for individuals and businesses. The most recent data from the Financial Conduct Authority shows 98 per cent of people in rural areas live within 3 miles of a free-to-use cash access point offering withdrawals.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has recently assumed regulatory responsibility for access to cash. and its rules went live on 18 September. These rules require the UK's largest banks and building societies to assess the impact of a closure of a relevant cash withdrawal or deposit facility and put in place a new service if necessary.

Where a consumer, or anyone with a strong connection to a local area, feels access to cash in their community is insufficient, they can submit a request for a cash access assessment. Further information about submitting a cash access request can be found at the following link: <https://www.link.co.uk/helping-you-access-cash/request-access-to-cash>

■ Companies: London Stock Exchange

Callum Anderson: [11403]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to bring forward proposals to block public listings on national security grounds.

Tulip Siddiq:

The previous government consulted on a power to block listings on national security grounds and published a summary of responses to this consultation in December 2021. The government keeps all policy under review.

■ Coronavirus: Contracts**John Glen:**[\[10697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Covid Corruption Commissioner will be a direct Ministerial appointment.

Darren Jones:

The government will shortly appoint a Covid Corruption Commissioner - this follows an open competition that closed on 30 September. The details can be found at <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles/8362?titleSearch=&bodySearch=®ulated=&bodyJustice=&remunerated=&status=open&sort=openingAt%3Adesc#attachments>

The Commissioner will lead work to recover public funds from companies that took unfair advantage of government schemes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ Education: Finance**Mr Lee Dillon:**[\[10245\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the proportion of the UK's national income spent on education.

Darren Jones:

The government recognises the importance of education and is committed to transforming the education system so that young people get the opportunity they deserve.

At the Spending Audit in July, DfE received an additional £2.1 billion in 2024-25, including to fully fund the 5.5% teacher pay award, at a national level, as recommended by the independent pay review body. At the Spending Review on 30 October, DfE received a settlement providing total DEL funding of £99.7 billion in 2025-26. This is equivalent to an annual average real-terms growth rate of 3.4% from 2023-24 to 2025-26.

To raise school standards for every child, the core schools budget will increase by an additional £2.3 billion next year, increasing per pupil funding in real terms.

■ Employers' Contributions: Wales**Ben Lake:**[\[11940\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of the allowance to public sector organisations for changes to employer national insurance contributions has been allocated to the Welsh Government.

Darren Jones:

Funding will be provided to the public sector to support them with the additional cost associated with changes to Employer National Insurance Contributions policy. Given the impacts of the policy change are complex, the UK Government departmental and devolved government settlements for 2025-26 announced at the Autumn Budget 2024 do not reflect this additional support.

Ahead of Main Estimates 2025-26, HM Treasury will lead a technical process to understand UK Government departments' requirements and will engage with the devolved governments on the implications for their budgets in the usual way.

■ Labour Force Survey**Yuan Yang:**[\[11774\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) accuracy and (b) utility of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey.

Tulip Siddiq:

Data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) remains subject to a number of quality concerns following a fall in response rates, which fell from 47.9% in June to August 2013 to 14.6% in June to August 2023.

The ONS is undertaking work to address these quality issues through improvements to its data collection and methodology. The ONS is also continuing to develop the [Transformed Labour Force Survey \(TLFS\)](#) as the long-term solution for collecting labour market data.

While these improvements are underway, LFS estimates are currently designated as 'official statistics in development', and the ONS advise caution when interpreting changes in headline LFS rates.

■ Pension Funds: Social Rented Housing and Temporary Accommodation**Mike Amesbury:**[\[10764\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling institutional pension funds to invest in (a) temporary family accommodation and (b) homes for social rent.

Tulip Siddiq:

In one of the first major acts of this Government, the Chancellor launched a landmark pensions review, dedicated to unlocking billions of pounds of investments to boost growth and make every part of Britain better off. The review is consulting widely and a recent call for evidence sought feedback on the role of pension schemes in investing in different asset classes. The first phase of the review will conclude in the coming months.

■ Pensions: Investment

Alison Taylor:

[\[11609\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to ensure that the Pensions Investment Review makes an assessment of the potential impact of each of its recommendations on people who plan to retire in the next five years.

Emma Reynolds:

Since launching in July, the Pensions Investment Review has focused on engaging with stakeholders and gathering insights and evidence. A Call for Evidence was published in September and the evidence received will inform our understanding of the impacts any changes in this area could have on savers.

Any measures that are taken forward into legislation will have the relevant accompanying impact assessments.

■ Public Finance

Stephen Gethins:

[\[11873\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Section 2.28 of the OBR's Economic and Fiscal Outlook, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of a 15% decrease in the UK economy on public finances.

Darren Jones:

The growth mission is the central mission of the government. Through the growth mission, the government is restoring economic stability, increasing investment, and reforming the economy to drive up prosperity and living standards across the UK.

The government sets its fiscal policy on the basis of the official OBR forecast, which is a central case. The OBR confirms the government is on track to meet its fiscal rules.

To clarify, section 2.28 of the OBR's latest Economic and Fiscal Outlook refers to a pre-existing judgement that has been captured in their forecasts for many years.

■ Research: Tax Allowances

Nick Timothy:

[\[11210\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many claims for Research and Development tax credits were made (a) fraudulently and (b) in error since 2010

James Murray:

Estimates of the level of error and fraud in research and development tax credits are published in HMRC's Annual Report and Accounts. The latest publication can be found on Gov.uk at: [HMRC Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024](#). The methodology used to calculate the level of error and fraud for 2020-2021 was significantly improved for the 2022-2023 Annual Reports and Accounts.

Estimates of the level of error and fraud in research and development tax credits for earlier years are not available on a comparable basis.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Employment: Discrimination

Mr Luke Charters:

[10960]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her department is taking to improve the protection for people who have experienced (a) bullying, (b) harassment and (c) disability discrimination at work.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Equality Act 2010 provides strong protection by prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination by an employer against a disabled employee because of disability. The Act also prohibits harassment of an employee by their employer for reasons related to their disability.

The 2010 Act additionally places a reasonable adjustment duty on employers that could be relevant, for example, to how duties are allocated or to how a promotion exercise is conducted. For example, ensuring internal job application forms are accessible to visually impaired employees and job interviews are accessible to the deaf or hard of hearing.

Although bullying is not expressly prohibited in legislation, this unacceptable behaviour can manifest as unlawful harassment. Additionally, employees are protected from constructive dismissal in the employment rights legislation, where bullying can feature in the lead up to dismissal.

Where disabled employees, as defined under the 2010 Act, feel that they have been unfairly treated, they may discuss their concerns with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), which provides authoritative and impartial advice free to employees or employers in relation to employment discrimination issues via their website (<http://www.acas.org.uk>) and telephone helpline 0300 123 1100 or text relay service 18001 0300 123 1100. Acas also provides employees and employers with Early Conciliation to help them resolve/settle their workplace dispute without going to court.

■ Gender Recognition

Josh Newbury:

[11078]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent progress her Department has made on bringing forward proposed reforms to the gender recognition certificate process.

Anneliese Dodds:

In our manifesto, we committed to reforming gender recognition law. We will remove indignities for trans people who deserve recognition and acceptance whilst retaining the need for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

We will set out our next steps on this work in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Assistance Animals

Sarah Hall:

[11449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether people with an assistance dog require documentation to enter food retail outlets and licensed premises.

Sir Stephen Timms:

There are no rules or regulations that make it a requirement for people with assistance dogs to have documentation to enter retail outlets, licensed premises or any other premises of businesses or service providers.

The Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on businesses and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled people, including people with assistance dogs, access to goods and services so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing the Equality Act. It has published guidance - [‘Assistance Dogs: a guide for businesses and service providers’](#) - to help those bodies understand what they can do to meet their legal duties to assistance dog owners.

Duties and protections under the Equality Act are ultimately enforceable through the courts, and anybody who thinks that they have been discriminated against - including where access to an assistance dog has been refused - can take legal action to seek to resolve the issue. The EHRC will support people who have experienced discrimination through that process.

This Government fully supports the principle that guide dogs and assistance dogs should always be allowed access, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

■ Disability Living Allowance: Older People

Ann Davies:

[11788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending eligibility of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance to individuals over the age of 65.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Disability Living Allowance and government mobility support is focused on providing additional help with the extra costs of disability to people who are severely disabled early, or relatively early, in life and who as a result, have had fewer opportunities to work, earn and save. Developing mobility needs in older life is a normal consequence of ageing, which non-disabled younger people have had opportunity to plan and save for.

It is normal for pensions and benefits systems to contain different provisions for people at different stages of their lives, because the help provided needs to reflect varying priorities and circumstances.

We constantly review our policies to ensure they meet the needs of our customers.

■ Employment: Advisory Services

Richard Burgon:

[\[11284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will hold discussions with disability organisations on the potential merits of visits by job coaches to mental health patients in hospital.

Alison McGovern:

Ministers across Government value the insights that can be gained from meeting with people with experience and the organisations that represent them. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions demonstrated this recently, sharing her experience of visiting a severe mental illness Individual Placement and Support programme.

The Individual Placement and Support employment model is internationally recognised as one of the most effective ways to support people with mental health problems to gain and keep paid employment. IPS services offer intensive, individually tailored support to help people choose and find the right job, with ongoing support for the employer and employee to help ensure the person sustains their employment.

Policy responsibility for the severe mental illness Individual Placement and Support programme rests with Ministerial colleagues at the Department for Health and Social Care.

■ Habitual Residence Test

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many habitual residence tests have been granted in each year of the last five years.

Andrew Western:

With the exception of Universal Credit, the information requested is not held centrally for the relevant DWP benefits and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

DWP uses the habitual residence test for income-related benefits (Universal Credit, State Pension Credit and Housing Benefit) to assess whether customers have a legal right to reside in the UK and whether they are factually habitually resident in the UK, as required in legislation. The habitual residence test is designed to prevent access to the welfare system for those who are not eligible and do not have an intention to live and/or work in the UK, ensuring both fairness in accessing public funds and that only those eligible are able to access benefits. All claimants must meet the requirements of the habitual residence test, including British citizens returning from periods of time living abroad, unless they are part of an exempt group as laid out in legislation (such as those fleeing specific humanitarian crises abroad specified in relevant secondary legislation).

■ Industrial Injuries: Agriculture

Sir John Hayes:

[\[11220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to reduce work-related injuries in the agricultural sector.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The safety and health of people at work in agriculture is a concern to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the industry. HSE uses a blend of approaches to influence and improve the health and safety record of the industry, reduce work-related injuries and to drive up industry ownership of the challenge and influence farmer behaviour. HSE produces guidance for farmers which is freely available on its website.

The guidance covers a range of topics including those that cause the most serious and fatal accidents and ill health. Between 2018 and 2024 there was an annual programme of delivering training to farmers in advance of targeted proactive inspection: they also investigate incidents and reports of risks not being managed properly, where duty holders fall below the standards required by health and safety legislation.

HSE take appropriate enforcement action including prosecutions. A recent two-year HSE campaign focused on two of the main causes of fatal and serious injury in farming, namely workplace transport and cattle [Work Right Agriculture – “Your Farm, Your Future”](#). The campaign provided guidance and direction to farmers about their legal duties. The campaign also included well-respected industry voices providing help and advice on how to control risk associated with workplace transport, vehicles, and cattle. The communications campaign reached 8.25m people in 2023/24.

HSE remains committed to working with the agricultural industry and putting its resource to best use to have maximum affect in helping the farming industry to control risk and stay safe and well.

■ Pension Credit

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[11546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average weekly Pension Credit payment was in April 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

Pension Credit data for April 2024 is not currently available.

The latest data is from February 2024, when the average weekly Pension Credit payment was £76.20.

The next iteration of Pension Credit statistics containing data to May 2024 will be available on Stat Xplore from 28th November 2024.

This data is available on Stat-Xplore at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk> in the ‘Pension Credit - Data from May 2018’ dataset. More information on the data included in the

'Pension Credit' dataset can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-statistical-summaries>. Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[11550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many new applications for Pension Credit were made between 10 September 2024 and 10 October 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

Data on how many pension credit applications have been made between 1 April 2024 and 22 September 2024 was recently published on gov.uk, [Weekly Pension Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 22 September 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

This shows that between 9 September and 22 September 2024, 25,200 Pension Credit applications were received by the Department.

On 28 October 2024, the department [announced](#) that updated Pension Credit applications and award statistics will be published on 28 November 2024. This publication will provide application volumes after 22 September 2024.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Disqualification

Jayne Kirkham:

[11735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department provides for people who have had their PIP suspended and are awaiting an appeal hearing.

Sir Stephen Timms:

There are nine possible award outcomes on a claim to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), ranging from a nil award through to an award of the enhanced rate of both the daily living and mobility component. The decision on a claim to, or an existing award of, PIP persists in law until such time as a new decision is made. As such, a claimant appealing against their decision will continue to receive the level of award, if any, that the decision entitles them to until such time as a new decision is made by the tribunal. Payment of that existing award will only be suspended in cases where there is evidence to suggest the award in place is incorrect, such as in cases of suspected fraud.

Claimants to PIP, whether they are appealing against a decision or not, can be entitled to a range of additional support depending on their circumstances, including benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit.

■ Social Security Benefits

Neil O'Brien:

[11629]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2024 to Question 11035, on Social Security Benefits, for which benefit lines the

Department holds data on the nationality of claimants at the point of National Insurance number registration.

Andrew Western:

Information on the nationality of claimants at the point of National Insurance number (NINo) registration is not used for benefit purposes so is not held on any benefit lines. As detailed in the [background information and methodology](#), the administrative data generated from the Adult NINo Allocation and Registration service is analysed to produce the quarterly statistical publication on '[National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK](#)'. The administrative data which underpins this publication is the Migrant Workers Scan (MWS) and it is sourced from the HMRC National Insurance and PAYE Service (NPS) which is not used for benefit purposes.

DWP policy responsibility lies in establishing the eligibility of non-UK / Irish claimants to claim benefits. An individual's specific nationality, either at the time of NINo registration or at the time of benefit claim, does not play a role in this. Eligibility differs by benefit but is usually determined by an individual's immigration status, alongside their ability to meet the requirements of the Habitual Residence Test (for income-related benefits), the Past Presence Test (for disability benefits), and / or having the necessary National Insurance contributions (for contributions-based benefits).

Neil O'Brien:

[\[11630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2024 to Question 11035 on Social Security Benefits, if her Department will resume its annual publication entitled Nationality at point of National Insurance number registration of DWP working age benefit recipients.

Andrew Western:

Decisions regarding the development and publication of Official Statistics are the responsibility of the Chief Statistician. There are no plans to resume publication of 'Nationality at point of National Insurance number (NINo) registration of DWP working age benefit recipients' statistics.

DWP policy responsibility lies in establishing the eligibility of non-UK / Irish claimants to claim benefits. An individual's specific nationality, either at the time of NINo registration or at the time of benefit claim, does not play a role in this. Eligibility differs by benefit but is usually determined by an individual's immigration status, alongside their ability to meet the requirements of the Habitual Residence Test (for income-related benefits), the Past Presence Test (for disability benefits), and / or having the necessary National Insurance contributions (for contributions-based benefits).

■ **Social Security Benefits: Children**

Ann Davies:

[\[12013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Written Statement of 30 October 2024 on Social Security, HCWS175, what estimate has she made of the number of additional welfare recipients affected by the benefit cap from April 2025 in (a) Wales and (b) the UK.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No estimate has been made.